COLERIDGE

THE ANCIENT MARINER

AND

CHRISTABEL

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES, ETC.

BY

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Rs. 2-0-0

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Printed and Published by K. T. Shahani at the Educational Printing Press, Kutchery Road, Karachi.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

Of the two collaborators, Prof. T. M. Advani is responsible for the General Introduction and the Introduction, Notes, etc., to *The Ancient Mariner*, while Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger is responsible for the Introduction, Notes, etc., to *Christabel*.

It is also necessary to state that Prof. Advani's edition of *The Ancient Mariner* first appeared in 1923; it has, however, been carefully revised for the present re-issue.

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THE ANCIENT MARINER

CHRISTABEL

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

I. General Features of the Romantic Age.

(The Age of Coleridge.)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'the subtle psychologist,' as he is popularly known in the world of literary criticism, belongs to an age rich in literary and poetic achievement. In the history of Literature this age is known as the Romantic Age or the age of the French Revolution. Victor Hugo significantly described it as the age of *Liberalism in Literature*. The literature of the period fully reflects the spirit of the age, the spirit of the French Revolution, the spirit that breaks away from the artificial restraints of the eighteenth century psuedo-classicism. It becomes free and liberal both in thought and expression. It becomes truly *romantic*: for the essential idea of Romantic Literature is that in it *the spirit must freely express itself*.

The Age is the second supreme creative age in the history of English Literature (the first being of course the Age of Shakespeare). This was due to the wonderful quickening of the emotional and imaginative sensibility which took place in the last two decades of the 18th century, and the entire universe —of Nature and Man—came to be invested with a new charm— 'the glory and freshness of a dream.' The attention of the poets was not confined, as in the preceding age, to town life or any other *set* subject, but their imagination was allowed freely to disport itself whither it would. Under these conditions all life became wonderfully fascinating. "At countless points the universe of sense and thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to and mingling with his richest and intensest life. Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of Gothic aisle, radiance of Attic marble,—all these springs of the poet's inspiration and the artist's joy began to flow, not at once, but in prolonged unordered succession."* As with the *subject*, so with the *form*. The

*C. H. Herford : The Age of Wordsworth.

stereotyped heroic couplet gave place to blank verse, and the polish, the correctness and the monotony of the eighteenth century was replaced by a truer poetic expression, distinguished for its freedom, naturalness, variety and music. In his *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, recounting the chief achievements of the Romantic poets, F. T. Palgrave says:

"They carried to further perfection the later tendencies of the century preceding, in simplicity of narrative, reverence for human passion and character in every sphere, and love of Nature for herself—that whilst maintaining on the whole the advances in art made since the Restoration, they renewed the half-forgotten melody and depth of tone which marked the best Elizabethan writers ;—that lastly, to what was thus inherited they added a richness in language, and a variety in metre, a force and fire in narrative, a tenderness and bloom in feeling, an insight into the finer passages of the soul and the inner meanings of the landscape, a larger sense of Humanity, hitherto scarcely attained or perhaps unattainable even by predecessors of not inferior individual genius."

II. Life and Personality of Coleridge.

Birth and Parentage.

Samuel taylor Coleridge was born on October 21, 1772, in the little Devonshire town of Ottery St. Mary, the youngest child of a family of thirteen children. His father, the Rev. John Coleridge, was the vicar of the parish church and the master of the Free Grammar School of the town. He was a simple, sincere, good-hearted man of somewhat eccentric ways and great scholarship and learning. The impression of his life and character on his children was deep and lasting, and the poet, in whom we discover several features of his father's personality, bears eloquent testimony to the purity and loftiness of his character, speaking of him as an 'Israelite without guile,' whose image was 'a religion' to him. The poet's mother is described as a woman of strong mind, 'industriously attentive to her husband's duties, and devoted to the care of her husband and family.'* She was ever anxious 'to make gentlemen of her sons'—a task which her unworldly, visionary husband was quite content to leave in her hands. Recognizing, however, the

*From Gillman's *Life of Coleridge*.

extraordinary genius of his youngest son, he took personal charge of his training; he used to have him with himself on his long rambles in the country and early interested him in subjects of philosophical and religious speculation.

Childhood.

The poet is reported to have been a child of extraordinary precocity, who could read at the age of three and who knew by heart long passages of the *Bible* and the *Arabian Tales* at five. Of the poet's boyhood and school days we get a fine and faithful picture in his own autobiographic notes; and therein he tells us that he took pleasure in boyish sports but read incessantly :—

"I read through all gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time and likewise all the [uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant Killer, and the like. And I used to lie by the wall and mope, and my spirits used to come upon me suddenly and in a flood; and then I was accustomed to run up and down the churchyard, and act over again all I had been reading on the docks, the nettles, and the rank grass. At six years of age I remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and Philip Quarles (Quarll) and then I found the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, one tale of which . . . made so deep an impression on me . . . that I was haunted by spectres whenever I was in the dark; and I distinctly recollect the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window where the book lay, and when the sun came upon it I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask, and read. My father found out the effect which these books had produced, and burned them. So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; I was fretful, and inordinately passionate; . . . despised and hated by the boys; . . . flattered and wondered at by all the old women . . . and before I was eight years old I was a *character*."*

Elsewhere he says :—

"I never played excepting by myself, and then only acting over what I had been reading or fancying, or half one, half the other, cutting down weeds and nettles with a stick as one of the champions of Christendom. Alas! I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child but none of the child habits, I never thought as a child—never had the language of a child."

Schooling.

From the age of six to nine Coleridge was educated in his father's Grammar School, where, as he tells us, he soon 'outstripped all of his age' and came to acquire considerable proficiency in the knowledge of the

*From Coleridge's letter to Poole.

classics, English Literature and theological and metaphysical books,—the favourites of his father. When he was nine, his father suddenly died, and the next year (1782) obtaining a presentation at the Christ's Hospital in London through the kindly interest of a former pupil of his father (the eminent Judge, Mr. Justice Buller) he left his home and joined this charity school. Here he met Charles Lamb—one of his life-long friends—who has left a vivid picture of Coleridge and the school in two of his famous essays.* The poor charity boys were ill fed and brutally flogged: and in these circumstances the life of the poor, friendless Coleridge was far from happy. He nevertheless benefited much by his stay in this school. An omnivorous reader, he indulged to the full his natural passion for metaphysical studies; and his sweet temper and gift of eloquent speech gained him a large circle of admiring friends, the most ardent of whom, Charles Lamb, thus describes him in one of the essays referred to above:

"Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How I have seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the Mirandula), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus or Plontinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy!*"

The dreamy propensities of this 'inspired charity boy' were strongly opposed to the practical commonsense of the Headmaster of the school—the Rev. Dr. Boyer—who usually impressed his views on his pupils with severe flogging; and naturally enough, poor Coleridge with his flitting fancies had a frequent taste of the Headmaster's merciless birch. One of these floggings, at any rate, the poet, in later life, characterised as just. On being informed that the boy (Coleridge) had taken a fancy to be apprenticed to a cobbler, he sent for him and asked him why he was making such a fool of himself. The boy replied he "hated the thought of becoming

**Recollections of Christ's Hospital* (1813) and *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty years ago* (1820)—both included in his *Essays of Elia.*

a clergyman."* "Why so?" enquired the Headmaster. "Because to tell you the truth, Sir," said the boy, "I am an infidel!" "So, sirrah, you are an infidel, are you? Then I'll flog your infidelity out of you!" And without more ado he proceeded to convert the young sceptic by means of the birch.[1] His brutal discipline apart, the Rev. Dr. Boyer was a sound and intelligent scholar, as Coleridge records in the *Biographia Literaria*. He gave his pupils a real apprehension of good literature, insisting on a comparative study of the English masters and the classics. He further paid especial attention to their exercises in English composition, putting down the slightest tendency towards the sentimental and the bombastic. Altogether the author says he exercised a very wholesome infuence in properly moulding his taste and judgment.

The poet's love experience and the poetry of Bowles liberate him from the spell of his metaphysical studies.

At the age of sixteen when the poet became a 'Grecian' (*i.e.*, a boy in the highest class in the Christ's Hospital), he had his first love-experience. The object of his attachment was one Mary Evans, the sister of a school-friend, who for kindness shown him in school, had invited the poet for a holiday to his home. About the same time the poet received from a former school-friend as a gift a copy of the Sonnets of William Lisle Bowles, which so delighted him that he is reported to have made about forty transcriptions of it and distributed them among his friends. What attracted him in the poetry of Bowles was, as he has told us in his *Biographia Literaria*, the naturalness of thought and expression so wanting in the artificial poetry of the pseudo-classical school of Pope. The same qualities were to be found in an even more marked degree in the poetry of Blake, Burns and other 'heralds of the Romantic Era'; but Coleridge was not at that time acquainted with their poetry. These two causes—his love-experience and his introduction to the poetry of Bowles—combined to secure the poet's liberation from the spell of metaphysical studies in which, as we know, he had come to be interested to a degree that was not desirable for the proper growth of his genius, and

* Coleridge was intended for the Church (in accordance with the wishes of his deceased father).

1 From the *Table-Talk* (May 27, 1830.)

from this time to his nineteenth year when he left school he devoted himself to poetry and love.

University life.

In 1791 Coleridge (then the captain of his school) with an exhibition from his school, was entered on the rolls of Jesus College, Cambridge; and in the very first year of his University career he won the Browne Medal for a Greek Ode on *The Unhappy lot of Slaves in the West Indies.* By reason of his gifts of brilliant conversation he soon became the centre of a large circle of admiring friends and his room used to be a frequent rendezvous of his college friends, when, as reported by one* of his circle, "Aeschylus, and Plato and Thucidides—(the college studies proper)—were thrust aside...to discuss the pamphlets of the day. Ever and anon a pamphlet issued from the pen of Burke. There was no need of having the book before us. Coleridge had read the book in the morning and in the evening he would repeat whole pages *verbatim.*" The poet, like all other fervid souls of Europe, had been deeply stirred by the French Revolution and had greeted the Fall of the Bastille as heralding the time when

"Liberty, the soul of life, shall reign,
Shall thorb in Every pulse, shall flow through every vein."

Coleridge and the French Revolution.

"As the Revolution went from horror to horror, first alarming, then alienating its early supporters in England, Coleridge for some time remained ardent in its support. For from the beginning it was the principle which underlay the Revolution that fired the enthusiasm; not so much sympathy with oppressed men as fervour for the cause of Freedom; for a time abstract theories of human perfectibility possessed him; Utopian dreams filled his thoughts. So at Cambridge he declaimed and theorised; made himself prominent as upholder of all whom he deemed friends of liberty or sufferers from tyranny; and became the centre of an admiring, sympathising group, who enjoyed his eloquence and were carried away by the warmth and brilliance of his monologues".[1] Coleridge's sympathy[2] for the

*Charles le Grice, one of the Blue-coat boys, who followed Coleridge to Cambridge.

1 Kathleen E. Royds: *Coleridge and his Poetry.*

2 Later, however, he lost faith in the Revolutionary movement and turned into a strong conservative, giving expression to his disillusionment in his *France: an Ode or Recantation.*

Revolution acted as a disturbing influence on the regularity of his university life. His studies became aimless and desultory, and in 1793, shortly after beginning his third year at College, he suddenly ran away from the college and enlisted in London in the King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, under the assumed name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach (retaining the initials *S. T. C.* of his own name). Why he took this erratic and irresponsible step has not been satisfactorily explained ; but it is attributed partly to his love-disappointment (Mary Evans having finally rejected him) and partly to worry over some money-debts. After two months' experience, tired of his military life and through the good offices of some friends (his captain among the number), he obtained his discharge on April 10, 1794, and returned to his Alma Mater, where he was received with a mild reproof. He continued here up to the close of the year, when he left it for good without taking any degree.

Coleridge and Southey.

While on a casual visit to Oxford some six months before leaving the University, Coleridge made the acquaintance of Robert Southey (the future poet-laureate and a young man of great beauty of character) which soon developed into an intimate friendship. And now the two friends, along with some other kindred spirits, formed the scheme of Pantisocracy for the regeneration of human society. On the banks of Susquehanna in America (selected, we understand, for the music of its name) the emigrants were to settle in an ideal community in which the citizens were to combine farming and literature. Physical labour was to be limited to two or three hours a day, the products of their industry being shared in common. Each member was to marry a good woman and take her with him. The two poets obeyed the last injunction first and married two sisters—Edith and Sarah Fricker*—daughters of a

Their scheme of Pantisocracy.

*It has to be noticed here that Coleridge married Sarah Fricker, fresh from his love-disappointment with Mary Evans and anxious to provide himself with a wife to fulfill one of the necessary conditions of the scheme of Pantisocracy. He felt no deep passion of love for the lady of his choice and naturally enough the marriage proved unhappy and ultimately resulted in a separation, as we shall see later.

Bristol tradesman. The chief difficulty in the fulfilment of this Utopian scheme was soon found to be the wherewithal necessary to embark on it, the friends having no money to pay even their travelling expenses. The two enthusiasts set to work to get what was required, and after an unsuccessful attempt at a joint drama, *The Fall of Robespierre* (full of the new revolutionary ideas), each of them undertook to deliver a set of lectures in Bristol. This too did not prove a great financial success on account of Coleridge's desultory ways ; and soon enough Southey, realising the impracticable nature of their scheme, abandoned it, to the intense chagrin and indignation of Coleridge.

Marriage with Sarah Fricker.

The 'bread and cheese' question becoming pressing, the poet had now to try a number of schemes to be able to support a home. In 1796 he published his first volume of poems, for the copyright of which his publisher and friend, Joseph Cottle,"* had already advanced him £30; and soon after started a literary and political magazine—*The Watchman*—which after running through ten numbers, had to come to an end for lack of subscribers[1].

Struggle for livelihood.

Then he took into his house, as a pupil, the son of a Quaker acquaintance, Charles Lloyd, who brought with him £80 a year as a help towards the house-keeping, and the poet giving up all attempts at leading a public life, retired to a little cottage in the Quantock village of Nether Stowey, in order to be near his friend, Thomas Poole, whose love and esteem he had secured in Bristol and who befriended him throughout his life. Here amidst the sweet influences of nature and human fellowship, the poet passed two of the happiest years of his life and produced all his best poetry. The first important event during his settlement at *Nether Stowey* was the arrival of the Wordsworths (William the poet and his sister Dorothy) in the neighbourhood. They had first met Coleridge in Bristol and soon

Settlement at Nether Stowey.

*To whom he had been introduced by the Quaker-poet Lovell, the husband of his wife's sister, Mary.

1. *Vide Biographia Literaria* (Chap. X) for an amusing account of the poet's efforts to secure subscribers for this Periodical.

Coleridge and Wordsworth—their literary friendship and the results thereof.

after Coleridge had visited them at Racedown (Dorsetshire). In June 1797, the Wordsworths returned the visit to Coleridge at Nether Stowey, and attracted by the prospect of the society of Coleridge they settled at *Alfoxden*, a cottage in the neighbourhood which had just then fallen vacant. Thus began one of the most famous literary friendships in English Literature which was fraught with momentous consequences both for the development of the genius of the two poets and for the progress of English poetry generally. The two poets, accompained by Dorothy, took long rambles in the green hills and valleys of the Quantocks ; and drawn by mutual admiration* and sympathy, held frequent talks on their poetic aims and aspirations ; and deeply and fruitfully influenced each other's character and genius. Their natural gifts are supposed to have been complementary, 'each possessing what the other had not.' "Coleridge's intellect was quick, versatile and penetrating ; Wordsworth's..........................more deeply meditative. Coleridge was idealistic, and ranged far in the realms of abstract thought ; Wordsworth, though he transformed them by the imagination, sought his inspiration among the things of every day."[1] The recognition by each that their spheres were different and complementary, gave rise to the scheme and publication of the famous *Lyrical Ballads*.[2] Coleridge's great contribution to this volume was the famous *Ancient Mariner*, his 'one perfect and complete achievement,' and three other poems ; and Wordsworth's nineteen poems. In the same year, 1797-8, he wrote *Christabel*, *Ode on the Departing Year*, *The Three Graves*, *Frost at Midnight*, *Love*, *The Ballad of the Dark Ladie*, as a matter of fact all his important poems with the exception of *Dejection* and the tragedy of *Osorio* and *Remorse*. This period was indeed 'the blossoming time of his poetic genius' ; and his poetic career virtually ended with September 1798.

The close of Coleridge's poetic career.

*"We were three people," says Coleridge, "but only one soul."

1 K. E. Royds : *Coleridge and his Poetry*.

2 *Vide infra* P. 17 for Coleridge's account of the origin of this book.

About this time the problem of livelihood was once again getting acute. His pupil Lloyd leaving his home on accuont of a little misunderstanding, the poet lost the income that he brought with himself for his upkeep; and hard pressed for money, he was seriously considering the offer of the post of a Unitarian minister at Shrewsbury, when all his financial difficulties were set at rest by the munificent annuity of £150 settled on him by two rich friends—the Wedgewoods—* on condition that he would devote himself entirely to poetry and philosophy. This enabled him to fulfil the long-cherished desire of a visit to Germany in the company of the Wordsworths. After a visit to the poet Klopstock at Hamburg, Coleridge and Wordsworth parted, Coleridge staying with a pastor at Ratzeburg, intent on acquiring a thorough knowledge of the German language. Later, he joined the University of Gottingen and drank deep of German literature and philosophy, having felt in particular the influence of Lessing in criticism and of Kant in philosophy ; and was thus enabled later to become 'the interpreter of Germany to England.'

Coleridge gets an annuity of £150.

And with the Wordsworths visits Germany.

After a nine-months' stay in Germany, the poet returned to England in July 1799 ; and spending some time with the Wordsworths in the Lake District, he went to London and accepted a brief engagement on the *Morning Post*. The next few years of the poet's life were the years of wandering, uncompleted plans and unrest. His health got impaired, and to make matters worse, he frequently resorted to opium and made himself a slave to the drug. His will was paralysed and he became quite unfit for any serious and systematic work. His constitutional indolence was intensified and he grew to be a great 'tomorrower,' planning many things but achieving nothing. He neglected his wife and children who were now supported by Southey, and fell into utter dejection and despondency, clearly revealed in his *Dejection* (which is indeed his 'cry from the depths.') The

The darkest years in Coleridge's life, 1800—16.

*Thomas and Josiah Wedgewood—the sons of the famous potter, who had come under the spell of the poet's genius through the good offices of his friend, Poole.

poet was fully conscious of his decline and degradation; at last he determined to free himself from his abject bondage and placed himself under the charge of an eminent physician, Dr. Gilman of Highgate, in whose house and under whose sympathetic care was passed the rest of his life. Slowly and gradually he emancipated himself from the fatal habit, and regaining some measure of health, devoted himself to critical and philosophical work, producing his most valuable prose works in Literary Criticism and Philosophy—the *Biographia Literaria*, *Notes on Shakespeare and Milton*, the *Lay Sermons* and the *Aids to Reflection*. In 1817 the poet issued the final collection of his poems under the title of the *Sibylline Leaves*.

Last Period: Emancipation from the opium habit and renewal of his lost energies and power.

The last years of the poet were much cheered by the warm admiration of his contemporaries and the sympathy and affection of several literary friends—among others, John Stirling, Thomas Carlyle, Edward Irving, Hazlitt, Lamb, Crabb, Robinson and several others—who gathered round him in Highgate to listen to his golden eloquence. Here, then, after nearly two decades of happy and useful activity in the house where he had found so 'excellent a refuge from all life's troubles,' the great 'philosopher-poet' passed away on July 25, 1834, and was buried in Highgate Church.

The last years of his life, cheered by the appreciation and admiration of contemporaries.

Thomas Carlyle in his *Life of Stirling* has drawn a very fine picture of the genius and personality of Coleridge and his standing and influence among his contemporaries, and we cannot do better than close this sketch of the Life of the Poet with the following extracts from his famous description :

"The good man—he was now getting old, towards sixty perhaps and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-anguished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow, as of inspiration......The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and

irresolute; expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walking he rather shuffled than decisively stept; and a lady once remarked he never could fix which side of the garden-walk would suit him best, but continually shifted, cork-screw fashion, and kept trying both; a heavy-laden, high-aspiring and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a plaintive snuffle and sing-song. He spoke as if preaching—you could have said preaching earnestly and almost hopelessly the weightiest things."........."Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill in those years, looking down on London and its smoke tumult like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle, attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. His express contributions to poetry, philosophy or any specific province of human literature or enlightenment had been small and sadly intermittent; but he had, especially among young enquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magical character. He was thought to hold—he alone in England—the key of German and other Transcendentalisms.................................
....A sublime man; who alone in those dark days had saved his crown of spiritual manhood, escaping from the black materialisms and revolutionary deluges with 'God, Freedom and Immortality' still his; a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him or carelessly reckoned him as a metaphysical dreamer; but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky sublime character and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma;—his Dorona oak grove (Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate) whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon."

III. Some Aspects of the Poetry of Coleridge.

Coleridge, the Metaphysician, as he is called, has produced more work in Criticism and Philosophy than in poetry,* poetry being but one of the many purſuits of his life and engaging him only in the earlier part of it. As Mr. Hales has said: "He did not take the Muse for better or worse and cleave only to her. It

*'Coleridge was so seldom the bard, and so often the metaphysician.' (Dawson.)

was only in his young manhood that he devoted himself to her; in the latter periods of his life political and critical questions mainly occupied him." Most of his work in poetry again was of a *fragmentary* nature. As we know, he was a *born procrastinator*—'a *living Hamlet*, for ever *plotting and designing but seldom acting*.' His last pieces—the *Christabel*, the *Kubla Khan*, etc.—are brilliant fragments. This small and fragmentary amount of Coleridge's poetry is, however, of exquisite quality. Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "All that he did excellently might be bound in twenty pages but it should be bound in pure gold."* This remark, however, is properly true only of the poetry of the 'Nether Stowey' period—the *annus mirablus*—the flowering-time of his poetic genius. His earlier poetry, as the poet himself acknowledges in his *Biographia Literaria*, is full of faults—being turgid, rhetorical, diffuse and harsh in diction and rhythm. Later, however, he out-grew all his deficiencies and produced a few select pieces like the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Christabel*, the *Kubla Khan*, *Love*, etc., which have taken their place among those masterpieces in English poetry which the world will not willingly 'let die.'

(*a*) Coleridge, an exquisite craftsman in verse.

Coming to an examination of the distinguishing features and qualities of the Poetry of Coleridge, the most striking thing, that which constitutes his charm and popularity with all classes and kinds of readers, is the perfection of his poetic workmanship. His best poems are indeed 'miracles of rare device.' Swinburne, the great poet critic,—himself a master of music—going into raptures over this aspect of his poetry, observes:

"Of Coleridge's best verses I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them and can never have; that they are of the highest kind and their own. An age that should neglect or forget Coleridge might neglect or forget any poet that ever lived. That may be said of him which can hardly be said of any but the greatest among men,—that come what may to the world in course of time, it will never see his place filled."

---

* "Who would not give up all the prose writings of Coleridge for another twenty pages of poetry like the *Ancient Mariner*?" Dawson.

This may be 'exaggerated' praise; but let us see what another critic,* not so emotional in temperament, says on the same point:

"With all who hold that the first duty of a singer is to sing, the poetry of Coleridge will always be more likely to be classed above than below its merits, great as they are. For, if we except some occasional lapses in his sonnets, his melody never fails him. He is a singer always, as Wordsworth is not always, and Byron almost never. The Æolian harp to which he so loved to listen does not more surely respond in music to the breezes of heaven than does Coleridge's poetic utterance to the wind of his inspiration."

(b) Coleridge, the Poet of the Supernatural.

Coleridge's most distinguishing quality—a quality that is peculiarly his and places him in a class by himself—is his strong sense of the supernatural. He was pre-eminently possessed of an imagination that easily soared in the realm of the shadowy and the invisible. 'He looked into the void and found it peopled with presences. His was the uncommon eye that beheld the unseen.'[1] Hence it is that the mystic and the weird enter largely into the spirit and framework of his most characteristic pieces.[2] In the *Kubla Khan* we get the 'sunless seas' and 'caverns measureless to man,' the 'waning moon' and 'woman wailing for her demon-lover.' In the *Christabel* the owl, the moan of the toothless mastiff, the dead hour of night, the hush and the silence and then the presence felt and seen of the ghostly form that arrests the devotions of the lovely lady Christabel and later presents her with a sight—'to dream of—not to tell'—all these transport the reader to a world of enchantment and mystery wherein literal reason and commonsense have no place. The *Ancient Mariner*, the most widely read of the poet's works, is also full of this supernatural element. The moon, the sun and the sky

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* H. D. Traill.

1. Alice Meynell, *Popular Studies of Nineteenth Century*.

2. Hence it is rightly urged that to truly appreciate the poet one must have a dash of the supernatural. Men of *literal* minds usually find him dull and unreal.

appear here as so many apparitions of the shadowy world :

'The moving moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide :
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside.'

This about the Moon : similarly we get the following about the Sun :

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars—
(Heaven's mother send us grace !)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

And can anything surpass the weird suggestiveness of the following lines :

Are those her ribs through which the Sun,
Did peer, as through a grate ?
And is that Woman all her crew ?
Is that a Death ? and are there two ?
Is Death that woman's mate ?

The effect of the sudden disappearance of the Phantom Ship is equally weird :

With far-off whisper o'er the sea
Off shot the spectre-bark.

Then we get the re-animating of the dead bodies of the sailors, the Polar Spirit of the Seas, the Demon-Voices, the magic breeze, the seraph-band appearing in crimson colours, etc., etc.,—and to truly realise the power of this poem all these touches of the supernatural have got to be taken into account.

(c) Coleridge and his descriptions of Nature.

It must however be pointed out that though the poet shows great preference for this 'shadowy' world—the world of the supernatural senses—he is not incapable of describing nature as it really is. His *Hymn before Sunrise, This Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, the *Nightingale* and other poems reveal the poet's feeling for nature and his close and faithful observation of its life. And it has been rightly said that some of his descriptions of the sea in the *Ancient Mariner* remain unsurpassed in the English Language. Prof. Stopford Brooke speaks in appreciation 'of the perfect pictorial skill and truth' of these descriptions, drawing especial attention to the description

of (*a*) the ship in the moonlight at sea in a tropic calm, (*b*) of the quiet harbour in the temperate zone, (*c*) the swift tropical squall and (*d*) that of the ship sailing quietly in smooth waters.* To these instances we might also add the famous description of the setting sun :—

> The western wave was all aflame,
> The day was well-nigh done !
> Almost upon the western wave
> Rested the broad bright Sun.

(*d*) Coleridge: The poet of the *inner* life.

Lastly, Coleridge, 'the subtle Psychologist,' shows in his poetry a remarkable knowledge of the inner side of Human Life. As a writer has remarked, 'Coleridge was as familiar with the avenues of the soul as Wordsworth was with the dales of his much-loved country. He could translate soul hieroglyphics as accurately as his fellow-poet could portray the landscape and the flower.' To illustrate this aspect of the poetry of Coleridge we take, for instance, his view of the close relationship of the spirit of love for God's creatures and the capacity to pray so beautifully portrayed in his *Ancient Mariner* :

> A spring of love gusht from my heart
> . . . . .
> The self-same moment I could pray.
> (ll. 284-291)

In the same poem the poet so forcibly brings home to the reader that the lesson of the necessity of love and human fellowship was realised by the Ancient Mariner through an experience of the horrors of utter solitude :

> O Wedding Guest ! this soul hath been
> Alone on a wide wide sea .

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*(*a*) ll. 263-71, beginning,
The moving moon went up the sky.
(*b*) ll. 472-79, beginning,
The harbour was clear as glass.
(*c*) ll. 318-326, beginning,
And the coming Wind did roar more loud.
(*d*) ll. 367-372, beginning,
It ceased, yet still the sails moved on.

So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce there seemed to be.
O sweeter than the marriage feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk,
With a goodly company !

Take again the following as descriptive of the two-fold effect of remorse:

"Remorse is, as the heart in which it grows :
If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
Of true repentance, but if proud and gloomy
It is a poison-tree, that pierced to the inmost
Weeps only tears of poison !"

In the following famous lines again the poet gives us another of those eternal truths about human life with which he was so familiar :

Life is but thought : so think I will
That youth and age are playmates still.

Here is yet another of the same kind :

Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live.

In this way the poetry of Coleridge will be found interspersed with similar observations on human life,—showing an insight into the inner man, which is supposed to be only next to that of Shakespeare.

INTRODUCTION TO 'THE ANCIENT MARINER'

I. 'The Ancient Mariner :' Genesis.

The Ancient Mariner was first published in 1798 in a volume of poems, by Wordsworth and Coleridge, called *Lyrical Ballads.*

Wordsworth gave the following account of its composition :*
"In the autumn of 1797, he [Coleridge], my sister and myself, started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the valley of stones near to it : and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem to be sent to the *New*

*In the Fenwick note to *We are Seven.*

Monthly Magazine. . . . Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock hills, towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the 'Ancient Mariner,' founded on a dream,* as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the 'Old Navigator,' as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution as a consequence of that crime, and of his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's 'Voyages' a day or two before that while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw Albatrosses in that lattitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose', said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that to me memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular,

'And listened like a three years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.'

These trifling contributions all but one, (which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded) slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous for me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. . . . . We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. *The Ancient Mariner* grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds; and we began to think of a volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told

*"A dream of 'a skeleton ship with figures in it.' "

the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium."

Circumstances of the composition of the poem.

Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, gives the following account of the origin of the poem and the general purpose of the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in which it was incorporated:

"During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them or to notice them when they present themselves.

"In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the minds attention

from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

"With this view I wrote the *Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published."*

As published in 1798 in the volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the *Ancient Mariner* was very different from the poem printed here. Coleridge intended to write in the style of the Old Ballads printed in Percy's *Reliques* and in the original form of the poem he imitated some of the old spellings. In the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) the poem was considerably revised. The Argument was altered, the text was

*In connection with what Coleridge has said here it might be noted that it has come to be more or less recognized by the modern critic that the latter of the two functions is the only proper function of poetry. As. Mr. Traill says: "To lend the charm of imagination to the real will appear to many people to be not one function of poetry merely but its very essence. To them it is poetry, and the only thing worthy of the name: while the correlative function of lending the force of reality to the imaginary will appear at best but a superior kind of metrical romancing or clever telling of fairy tales. Nor of course can there, from the point of view of the highest conception of the poet's office, be any comparison between the two. In so far as we regard poetry as contributing not merely to the pleasure of the mind but to its health and strength—in so far as we regard it in its capacity not only to delight but to sustain, console and tranquillise the human spirit—there is, of course, as much difference between the idealistic and realistic forms of poetry as there is between a narcotic potion and a healing drug. The one at best can only enable a man to forget his burdens; the other forbids him to endure them."

much changed and the extreme archaisms in spelling disappeared. The poem was reprinted in the same form (with the omission of the argument) in 1802 and 1805. In 1817 the poem was again revised and published in a volume of Coleridge's collected poems called the *Sibylline Leaves.* In this edition first appeared the marginal notes and the motto from Burnet, and some additional changes in the text were made. The text adopted in the present book is that of this final edition of the poem.

Other Sources of the Poem.

In addition to the two sources of the poem pointed out in Wordsworth's Fenwick Note (quoted above), *viz., Shelvocke's Voyages* and the Dream of Coleridge's friend Mr. Cruikshank, two other sources have been suggested. In an unsigned article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October 1853, it is suggested that the animating of the dead bodies by a troop of seraphs, who bring the ship to harbour, was derived from a letter of a certain Paulinus, Bishop of Nola in the 4th century and a friend of S. Ambrose, to Macarius, Vice-Prefect of Rome, relating the 'astounding wonders' which befell a corn ship that had narrowly escaped ship-wreck on the coast of Sardinia :

'The men let down the life-boat. One only, an old man who was working at the pump, was left behind, being altogether forgotten. The old man found no object in view but the sea and sky. The feeling of loneliness increased the terror. Six whole days and nights he passed without breaking bread, longing only for death to close the dreary scene. At length our dear Lord not only deigned to visit the old man in his misery, but gave him new life with the food of His word. Then follow examples of wonderful assistance given in managing the ship for any piece of work. Scarce could he leap forward when he saw that angelic hands were busy about his task. No sooner did he touch a rope than the sail ran along the yard, and the ship made way. Sometimes indeed it was vouchsafed him to behold an armed band who kept their watches on the deck and acted in all points as seamen. What crew indeed but a crew of angels were worthy to work that vessel which was steered by the Pilot of the world? At the helm sat our dear Lord. Devious was the course of that vessel. At length, after twenty-three days, by God's good grace it made an end of its perilous course on the Lucanian shore. Inspired by the Eternal Lord, some fishermen put forth from land, and, seeing the ship in the offing, were in the utmost terror and attempted to fly, for it looked, as they afterwards said, just like a ship of war. With loud and repeated shouts the old man called them back, and, when they were

alongside, assured them there were no soldiers on board, and they at last credited the evidence of their own eyes. The fishermen towed the ship in triumph into the harbour.'*

Lastly, in a small book entitled *The Source of the 'Ancient Mariner,'* Mr. Ivor James has raised the question of Coleridge's indebtedness for his description of the voyage in the South Atlantic Ocean to *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James, in his intended Discovery of the North-west Passage into the South Sea* (1633). The reviewer (*Athenaeum*, March 1890) gives it as his judgment that 'it is hardly probable that Mr. James will carry any of his readers within measurable distance of his conclusion, but it must be allowed that he has established the extreme probability of Coleridge having read Capt. James's narrative, and that a little of the local colour of the great poem is reflected from it.' Then are given a number of phrases which 'show that the correspondences are not accidental.' A few of these will suffice as illustrations :

'All day and all night, it snow'd hard'; 'The nights are very cold'; 'We had Ice not farre off about us, and some peices as high as our Top-mast-head'; 'The Ice......crackt all over the Bay, with a fearful noise'; 'These great pieces...began to break with a most terrible thundering noyse'; 'This morning...we came to saile, steering betwixt great pieces of Ice that were......twice as high as our Top-mast-head.'

Per contra (the reviewer adds), while Coleridge's mariner saw his ice "green as emerald," Capt. James saw it blue—"some of the sharpe *blue* corner (of the great pieces of ice) did reach quite under us." 1.

Notwithstanding all these borrowings (acknowledged and unacknowledged), the poem will always remain a masterpiece of originality, so thoroughly are the various sources transformed by the magic touch of the poet and welded together into an artistic whole.

II. A Critical Estimate of 'The Ancient Mariner.'

Cold reception of the poem on its first appearance.

This famous poem of Coleridge, now justly regarded as a masterpiece in English poetry, was curiously enough, on its first appearance, very coldly received. Even the poet's own friends, Southey, Lamb and Wordsworth, did not show any

*Abbreviated from the translation of the letter given in the article mentioned above.

1. Cresswell in his edition of Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*.

appreciation of it. Southey spoke of it as 'a very Dutch attempt at sublimity'. Lamb said that 'he disliked all the miraculous part in it.' Wordsworth thought that 'the poem had great defects'. Time has, however, abundantly vindicated the excellence of this poem, and it has now come to be regarded as one of the world's great poems and the greatest written by its author. "For," as Mr. Traill says, "this weird ballad abounds in those very qualities in which Coleridge's poetry with all its merits is conspicuously deficient, while on the other hand, it is wholly free from the faults with which he is most frequently and justly chargeable."

Now regarded a masterpiece, and the best of the author's poems.

In critically examining the poem we shall look at it from three different aspects. The first of these is the artistic or poetic aspect of the poem; and judged from this point of view the *Ancient Mariner* will bear comparison with the most flawless and perfect pieces in English poetry. "All the mechanisms of the poem, its metre, rhyme and melody, are perfect; and some of its descriptions of the lonely seas have never been equalled. Perhaps we should say suggestions, rather than descriptions, for Coleridge never describes things, but makes a suggestion, always brief and always exactly right, and our own imagination instantly supplies the details."* The greatest achievement of the Poem is the simple realistic force of the narrative. To achieve this, was of course Coleridge's main object: he had undertaken to transfer from "our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." "But it is easier to undertake this than to perform it, and much easier to perform it in prose than in verse—with the assistance of the every day and the commonplace than without it......Coleridge triumphs over his difficulties by *sheer vividness of imagery* and *terse vigour of descriptive phrase*,—two qualities for which his previous poems did not prove him to possess by any means so complete a mastery......In the *Ancient Mariner*, his eye never seems to wander from his object, and again and again the scene starts out upon the canvas in two or three strokes of the brush. The skeleton ship with the dicing demons on its deck; the setting

(*a*) The artistic or poetic aspect of the poem.

*Long—*English Literature.*

sun peering 'through its ribs, as if through a dungeon-grate'; the water-snakes under the moon-beams, with the 'elfish light' falling off them 'in hoary flakes' when they reared up; the 'dead crew who work the ship and raise their limbs 'like lifeless tools'—everything seems to have been actually *seen*, and we believe it all as the story of a truthful eye-witness. The details of the voyage too are chronicled with such order and regularity, there is such a diary-like air about the whole thing, that we accept it almost as it were a series of extracts from the ship's log. Then again the execution—a great thing to be said of so long a poem—is marvellously equal throughout; the story never drags or flags for a moment: its felicities of diction are perpetual; and it is scarcely marred by a single weak line......Perfect consistency of plan, in short, and complete equality of execution, brevity, self-restraint, and an unerring sense of artistic propriety—these are the chief notes of the *Ancient Mariner*, as they are not the chief notes of any other poem of Coleridge."*

(b) Coleridge's use of the marvellous in *The Ancient Mariner*.

We now consider the second aspect of the poem—its use of the supernatural or the marvellous. Some critics, among others the poet's friends—Wordsworth and Lamb—have objected that the poem is wanting in probability on account of its defective use of the supernatural. Notwithstanding the fact that Coleridge to an extent admitted the force of this objection, modern critical opinion seems perfectly agreed that this objection is quite flimsy and futile. For though the poem introduces us to a supernatural realm, with a phantom crew, the polar spirit and the magic breeze, it nevertheless manages to create a sense of absolute reality concerning these manifest absurdities. As a writer says: 'The marvels are not mere anomalies protruded, but elements in a magical world of their own, fantastic as a dream but yet consistent as reality. Scenery, atmosphere, even the colouring of phrase and rhythm, concur in giving to this magical world the harmonious unity of a possible experience'. The following remarks of Walter Pater—one of the acutest critics of the 19th century—on this the supernatural aspect of the Poem, will be found very helpful in this connection :—

* H. D. Trail: *Coleridge* (English Men of Letters Series).

"The *Ancient Maqiner*...is a 'romantic' poem, impressing us by bold invention, and appealing to that taste for the supernatural, that longing for *le frissen*, a shudder, to which the 'romantic' school in Germany, and its derivations in England and France, directly ministered. In Coleridge, personally, this taste had been encouraged by his odd and out-of-the way reading in the old-fashioned literature of the marvellous—books like Purchas's *Pilgrims*, early voyages like Hakluyt's, old naturalists and visionary moralists, like Thomas Burnet...(Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysus downwards, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions.) This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree : it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness* with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as part of a credible experience in our dreams...............The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutiniz-

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**Cf*. in this connection the following remarks of Swinburne and Dowden on the omission of the stanzas which appeared in the original edition at ll. 185 and 199 :—

"One such alteration is memorable to all students of his art ; the excision from the 'Ancient Mariner' of a stanza which described the Death-mate of the Spectre-Woman, his bones foul with leprous scurf and green corruption of the grave, in contrast to the red lips and yellow locks of the fearfuller Nightmare Life-in-Death.................This keen and tender sense of right made Coleridge reject from his work the horrors while retaining the terrors of death." (*Swinburne*.)

P. T. O.

ing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more finely touched than was possible in the older, romantic presentment of it. The spectral object, so crude, so impossible, has become plausible, as

'The blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without';

and is understood to be but a condition of one's own mind, for which, according to the scepticism, latent at least, in so much of our modern philosophy, the so-called real things are but *spectra* after all.

"It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his own more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner* unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of medieval or later German romance, growing up in a peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this—a composition of quite different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore.

"Completeness, the perfectly rounded wholeness and unity of the impression which it leaves on the mind of a reader who fairly gives himself to it—that, too, is one of the characteristics of a really excellent work, in the poetic as in every other kind of

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"Relying largely, as he did in his poems dealing with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural, and refine it to the uttermost... ....He did not need, as Monk Lewis did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard and the nether pit of Hell... ....In *The Ancient Mariner*, where the spectre-bark approaches the doomed ship... ....a verse full of charnel abominations occurs in the original text which was afterwards judiciously omitted. Coleridge felt that these hideous incidents of the grave only detracted from the finer horror of the voluptuous beauty of his White Devil, the nightmare Life-in-Death." (*Dowden*.)

art; and by this completeness, *The Ancient Mariner* certainly gains upon *Christabel*...........It is Coleridge's one great complete work, the one really finished thing, in a life of many beginnings."

(c) The moral and spiritual significance of the Poem.

There remains one more aspect of the poem to consider—viz., its moral and religious significance. Coleridge did not hold the view that the function of poetry was to moralise or to give a 'criticism of life': all the same this poem of his at any rate is charged with a deep moral and spiritual meaning. Margaret Royds says :—"The *Ancient Mariner* is permeated with a wide charity, a humanitarian spirit which, in spite of Coleridge's deprecation of the attempt to read any particular lesson into it, makes it truly *one of the most moral poems* in our literature."

Stopford Brooke in his *Theology in English Poets*, dealing with this aspect of the poem, says :

"The poem illustrates still further—and this gives its especial interest to us—the personal simple religion of Coleridge. We see in it how childlike the philosophic man could be in his faith, how little was enough for him. Its religion is all contained in the phrase—'He prayeth well who loveth well, Both man and bird and beast.' On this the changes are rung throughout; the motiveless slaughter of the bird is a crime; the other mariners who justify the killing of the bird because of the good it seems to bring them are even worse sinners than the Ancient Mariner. He did the deed on a hasty impulse; they deliberately agree to it for selfish reasons. They sin a second time against love by throwing the whole guilt on him, and again for selfish reasons. They are fatally punished ; he lives to feel and expiate his wrong. And the turning point of his repentance is in the re-awakening of love, and is clearly marked. Left all alone on the sea, 'he despiseth the creatures of the calm and envieth that so many should live and so many lie dead,' and in that temper of contempt and envy Coleridge suggests that no prayer can live. But when seven days had passed, he looked again on God's creatures of the great calm, and seeing their beauty and their happiness, forgot his own misery, and the curse and himself in them, and blessed and loved them; and in that temper of spirit prayer became possible :

O happy living things ! No tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed in my heart
And I blessed them unaware.
The self-same moment I could pray.

"The main thought and its details have their own beauty and they illustrate the new love of animals in English Poetry."

Mrs. Oliphant's remarks on this head will also be found interesting :

"And then comes the ineffable, half-childish, half-divine simplicity of those soft moralisings at the end, so strangely different from the tenor of the tale, so wonderfully perfecting its visionary strain. After all, the poet seems to say, after this weird excursion into the very deepest, awful heart of the seas and mysteries, here is your child's moral, a tender little half-trivial sentiment, yet profound as the blue depths of heaven. This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement, which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry."

III. The Form of The Poem.

The Ballad of the Traditional kind.

The Ancient Mariner is written in the form of a Ballad or a 'short story in verse.' This form of poetry "appears to have arisen spontaneously in almost all literatures, and represents one of the earlier stages of the poetic art. Our own literature is particularly rich in *ballads of the true traditional kind*, of which the authorship has long since been forgotten, and which alike in form and spirit bear evident traces of the unlettered but vigorous times out of which they sprang, and of the tastes of the popular audiences for which they were originally made. Their *themes* are commonly furnished by the more elementary aspects of life; large space is given in them to tales of adventure, fighting, deeds of prowess and valour; they have frequently a strong infusion of supernaturalism, while love, hatred, pity and the simpler interests of the domestic lot, receive a full share of attention. In *method and style* they are characterised by straightforwardness and rapidity of narration and a certain childlike naivete; often crude, they are often, too, astonishingly

energetic ; and while habitually garrulous in matters of detail, they *seldom linger over description or concern themselves about motive and passions, save as these translate themselves immediately into action.* Many of these ballads have immense dramatic power and wonderful metrical beauty.

The Modern Ballad.

"The modern ballad is a literary development of the traditional form, to which it keeps very close; as in such admirable examples of the simpler narratives in verse as Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, Kingsley's *The Sands of Dee*, Longfellow's *The Wreck of Hesperus.* More often, however, while it clearly owes much to the inspiration of early poetry and preserves its best traditions, it shows the powerful influences of a later age in its tendency to greater elaboration, the enlargement of description and psychological interest, and a more finished style of art. The really characteristic modern ballad therefore represents the natural expansion, not the artificial reproduction, of the primitive type. It is not in laborious imitations of primitive models, with their attempts to recover the spontaneous simplicity of nature through the studied simplicity of art, their deliberate archaisms* and their consequent flavour of affectation and formalism, but in poems like Tennyson's *The Revenge*, Browning's *Herve Riel*, Rossetti's *The King's Tragedy* that we are in the true line of literary evolution ; for these, while they have all the sterling qualities of the old ballads, have nothing merely imitative about them, but are, on the contrary, essentially modern and original poems."[1].

Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, with its deep psychological and moral interest, should be classed with the Modern Ballads, though it has all the other essential features of the traditional type. The fact is, Coleridge intended to write his poem in the style used in the ballads in Percy's *Reliques of AncientPoetry.*[2]

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*Realising this Coleridge in later editions of the *Ancient Mariner* dropped many of the archaisms of the first edition.

1. Hudson : *Introduction to the Study of Literature*.

2. "Thomas Percy (the editor of the *Reliques*) was a clergyman who was much interested in old poetry. He had long collected ballads from all possible quarters, when he came into possession of a large folio manuscript which had been 'lying on the floor under a bureau in the parlour, of a friend. The maids were using it to light the fire. *P. T. O.*

The especial ballad-peculiarities* that we notice in the poem are :—

(i) The extreme simplicity and terseness of expression.
(ii) The abrupt directness and rapidity of narration.
(iii) The prevalence of archaic words and spelling.[1]
(iv) The use of conventional phrases and repetition of phrases.
(v) The use of the supernatural.
(vi) The use of the poetic devices of alliteration (a distinctive feature of Anglo-Saxon poetry) and onomatopoeia.

IV. A Note on the Metre of the poem.

The metre of the *Ancient Mariner* will appear at first sight quite irregular : but when closely examined, all the irregularities will be found to follow certain higher laws of harmony, making the poem one of the most musical ones in the English Language. What Coleridge said of the *Christabel* in his Preface to that poem, is in a way true also of this poem :

"I have only to add, that the metre of the *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle ; namely, that of *counting in each line the accents, not the syllables*......Nevertheless, *this occasional variation in the number of syllables is not introduced wantonly*, or for the mere ends of convenience, *but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.*"

"This manuscript contained a large number of ballads. In 1765, Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The greater part of them, he said, were extracted from the folio MS. But Percy was afraid that the genuine ballads would seem too rough if he printed them just as they stood. Accordingly he only took 45 out of the 176 pieces in his *Reliques* from the MS. and these he re-arranged and sometimes re-wrote so that some of them bear little resemblance to the originals. But this was not known to Percy's contemporaries, and only became generally known a hundred years later when his folio MS. was reprinted exactly as it was written." (*A. Guthkelch*).

*In the Notes attention is drawn to the illustration of these peculiarities.

1. In the revised edition many of these were either dropped or modified.

Normally the poem is written in stanzas of four iambic lines of four and three accents alternately, the second and the fourth, and the first and the third, being rhymed. Here is an instance of such a normal stanza :

The shìp | was cheèred | the hàr | bour clèared
Me rrì | ly dìd | we dròp
Be lòw | the kìrk | be lòw | the hìll,
Be lòw | the lìght | house tòp,

The common stanzaic variation that we get is the addition of one or two verses rhymed or unrhymed. (For illustrations *vide* the stanzas commencing at ll. 45, 91, 97, 157, 162, etc.). One single stanza (commencing at l. 203) is of exceptional length, consisting of nine lines in three sets of three. To avoid monotony the poet adopts various metrical and other devices.—In the first instance for this purpose he introduces a large number of stress-variations. The following are the most noticeable :—

(*a*) The use of a falling inflection (*a trochee*) instead of the normal rising one (an *iambus*).

Illustration—

Under | the kèel | *nìne* fathom | dèep (1.377).

(*b*) The use of two syllables in a foot *both* being accented (*a spondee*).

Illustration—

Dówn drópt | the brèeze | the sàils | dòpt dròwn (1. 107).

(*c*) The use of two syllables in a foot *both* being *unaccented* (a *pyrrhic*).

Illustration—

And it | grew wòn | drous còld. | (1. 52).

(*d*) The use of a foot of three syllables, one or two of which are accented in a rising rhythm (an *anapaest*) :

For the sèa | and the sky | and the sky | and the sèa. (1. 250).

(*e*) The omission of the first (unstressed) syllable :

Fòr | she guìdes | him smóoth | or grím. (1. 149).

(*f*) The addition of a syllable at the end (called the feminine ending).

Nìne fa | thom dèep | he hàd | follòwed | *us*.

Another method of avoiding monotony is to vary the position of the pause. In the normal line the pause generally occurs at

the end of a line and sometimes in the middle (cæsura). Variety is secured by—

(i) having the pause at the end of the first or the third foot in a verse of four feet.

There passed | a we | ary time | || Each throat. (1. 143.)

(ii) having more than one pause in a verse:

They groaned, | they stirred, | they all | uprose.

(iii) having one verse overflowing into the next (a *run-on* or *unstopt* verse):

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk |

In this connection there is one more metrical device to note —*viz.*, the poet's use of what is known as the *internal* or *leonine* rhyme.*

And all was *still*, save that the *hill* (1. 558).
With his cruel *bow*, he laid full *low* (1. 400).

An examination of the versification of the poem will indeed show how perfect the metrical skill of the poet is, and what care and labour are bestowed by him in pruning and polishing his verses. Mr. Swinburne, appreciating this technical skill of the poet as displayed in *The Ancient Mariner*, says:—"And this poem is beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry... For the execution, I presume no human eye is too dull to see how perfect it is and how high in kind of perfection. Here is not the speckless and elaborate finish which shows everywhere the fresh rasp of file or chisel on its smooth and spruce excellence; this is faultless after the fashion of a flower or a tree."

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* This will be found to occur as a rule in the third line of the stanza.

THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER.

IN SEVEN PARTS.

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in Tabula, majoris et melioris mundi, imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus. —*T. Burnet*: *Archaeol. Phil.*, *p. 68.*

ARGUMENT.

How a Ship, having passed the Line, was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancient Mariner came back to his own Country. (1798).

PART I

An Ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off ! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old sea-faring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
An listens like a three-years' child :
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone ;
He cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he !
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music, but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she ;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
  Yet he cannot choose but hear ;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
  The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the Storm-blast came, and he
  Was tyrannous and strong :
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
  And chased us south along.

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
  And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
  And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
  And it grew wondrous cold :
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
  As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
  Did send a dismal sheen :
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
  The ice was all between.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
  The ice was all around :
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
  Like noises in a swound !

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog and was received with great joy and hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward, through fog and floating ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine.

The Ancien Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen.

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,

Nor any day for food or play
  Came to the mariners' hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
  And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
  That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
  That made the breeze to blow!

His ship-mates cry out against the Ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
  The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
  That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
  That bring the fog and mist.

But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
  The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
  Into that silent sea.

The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
  'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
  The silence of the sea!

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.

All in a hot and copper sky,
  The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
  No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
  We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

As idle as a painted ship,
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout,
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning which the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the spirit that plagued us so:
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah, well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

The ship-mates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner; in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The Ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,

A flash of joy.

And horror follows. For can it be a *ship* that comes onward without wind or tide?

And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well-nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun. The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship.

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

Like vessel, like crew!

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:

Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare, Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice ;
'The game is done ! I've won ! I've won !'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice

Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew and she (the latter) winneth the Ancient Mariner.

The Sun's rim dips : the stars rush out :
At one stride comes the dark ;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

We listened and looked sideways up !
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip !
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white ;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

At the rising of the moon,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

One after another,

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

His shipmates drop down dead.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the Ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly—
They fled to bliss or woe !
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow !

PART IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him.

' I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
I fear thy skinny hand !
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

But the Ancient Mariner assureth him of his body life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea !
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

The many men, so beautiful !
And they all dead did lie :
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on ; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie died.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away ;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray ;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,

A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the
sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onwards; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes :
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire :
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam ; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty and their happiness.

O happy living things ! no tongue
Their beauty might declare :
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware :

He blesseth them in his heart.

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The spell begins to break

The self-same moment I could pray ;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

O sleep ! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole !
To Mary Queen the praise be given !
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

By grace of the holy Mother, the Ancient Marier is refreshed with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamed that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light,—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:

Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
 A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspirited, and the ship moves on.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
 Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the moon
 The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
 Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
 But he said nought to me.—

But not by the souls of the men nor by daemons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!'
 Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
 But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their
arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the Heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid : and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean ;
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length,
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound :
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-daemons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the Ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare ;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two Voices in the air.

'Is it he ?' quoth one, ' Is this the man ?
By Him Who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew :
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

'But tell me, tell me ! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast ?
What is the Ocean doing ?'

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance ; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE.

'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

The supernatural motion is retarded; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high,
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:

Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of Spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too :
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed
The light-house top I see ?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?
Is this mine own countree ?

And the Ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
Oh, let me be awake, my God !
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn !
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock :
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weather cock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,

The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,

Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

And appear in their own forms of light.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were :
I turned my eyes upon the deck
O Christ ! what saw I there ?

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood !
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
It was a heavenly sight !
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light ;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand ;
No voice did they impart—
No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer ;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast :
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third— I heard his voice :
It is the hermit good !

He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII.

The Hermit of the wood.

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!

I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were
Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;

When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
  That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord ! it hath a fiendish look—
  (The Pilot made reply),
I am afeared.'—'Push on, push on !'
  Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
  But I nor spake nor stirred ;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
  And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,
  Still louder and more dread :
It reached the ship, it split the bay ;
  The ship went down like lead.

The Ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
  Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
  My body lay afloat ;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
  Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
  The boat spun round and round ;
And all was still, save that the hill
  Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—The Pilot shrieked
  And fell down in a fit ;

The Holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha, ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The Ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him; and the penance of life falls on him.

'O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,

I know the man that must hear me
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The Wedding-Guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O, sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach by his own example love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

NOTES.

Rime, A more correct though a less common form of the word than the ordinary 'rhyme' (Der. *A. S. rim*), the latter being due to its being confused with the Gk. *rhythm*.

The Motto from Burnet, translated—

"I can readily believe that there is in the universe a greater number of invisible than of visible beings. But who shall declare to us the estate of all these, their ranks and kinships, their distinctive qualities, and the functions that they severally perform ? Upon what task are they employed ? In what regions do they dwell? The mind of man has ever sought to gain a knowledge of these matters, but to that knowledge it has never fully attained. Meanwhile, I do not deny, it gives us pleasure now and then to contemplate in the mind, as if sketched in a·picture, the image of this larger and better world, lest the mind, becoming accustomed to the trifling details of everyday life, grow too narrowed, and sink entirely to trivial thoughts. Yet we must at the same time keep watch upon truth, and maintain a dispassionate judgment, that we may distinguish certainty from uncertainty, day from night."

[Thomas Burnet (1635—1715) was a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and Master of the Charter House.]

The argument. The "Argument" in the second edition (1800) was as follows :

"How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly, and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a sea-bird, and how he was followed by many strange judgments, and in what manner he came back to his own Country."

Part I (ll. 1—82).

Analysis *(ll. 1—82) An 'Ancient Mariner' with a 'grey beard' and 'glittering eye' meets three young persons wending their way to a wedding-feast, and holding one of them with the power of his eye in spite of his impatient unwillingness, narrates to him the story of his strange adventure on*

the sea. He begins by describing the commencement of his voyage in the ship in beautiful weather till they reached the line of the Equator. Thereafter suddenly a fierce gale arose from the Northern skies, driving their vessel to the extreme South in the regions of 'mist and snow' where for long they were locked in fields of ice where was not to be seen a trace of any life. The appearance of a huge sea-bird,—an Albatross,—however, heralded the breaking up of the ice and their safe passage out of this zone of danger with a favourable Southern wind taking them towards the North. For nine days this bird 'of good omen' kept following the ship, responding to the call of the sailors for food or for play till the speaker (the Ancient Mariner) took it in his head to kill the bird with his cross-bow.

1. *It is, etc.*, this is a direct, abrupt beginning—a feature of old ballad poetry.—*Cf.* Longfellow's *The Wreck of Hesperus* :

"It was the schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintry sea;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,
To bear him company."

Ancient, used with a double sense of (1) 'old' and (2) 'of olden times'. This word is quite in keeping with the undefined atmosphere of 'bygone days' which permeates the whole poem.

2. *One of three*, the old Mariner meets three wedding-guests but stops one of these to relate his story to him. The poet's use of the number—*three*—is in conformity with the mystic or supernatural significance that has come to be attached to the numbers three, five, seven and nine. See, for example, Rossetti's, *Blessed Damozel* :

'She had *three* lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were *seven*.'

Tennyson writes in the *Hesperides* :

' . . . . five and three,
Let it not be noised abroad, make an awful mystery.'

"There are, you remember, *nine* Muses, *seven* wonders of the world, *three* fates, etc."—Herbert Bates.

3. *By thy long, etc.*, Note again tbe abrupt commencement of the speech of the wedding-guest, also the poet's skill in indirectly describing the 'Ancient Mariner' in the address of the wedding-guest.

"It has been urged as a point against the framework of the poem, that the introduction of the Wedding-Guest serves no useful purpose, and only interferes with the even course of the story. But surely, on the contrary, it helps to give just that shade of reality to the setting of the Mariner's tale which is wanted to bring it into the world of 'things as they are,' and to show its bearing on life. There is in this opening passage the additional effect of the contrast between the joy of the feast and this strange mystery which is to be unfolded."—Creswell.

glittering eye, a feature of the poet's own personality.

5. *opened wide*, *sc.* for the reception of the wedding-guest.

6. *next of kin*, nearest relative (of the bridegroom).

8. *mayst*, canst—a sense of the word frequent in old Elizabethan English. The omission of the pronoun shows the impatience of the speaker.

din, usually unpleasant noise, is used here in a good sense to express the confused sounds of the feast.

9. *skinny*, which was all skin and no flesh; thin and withered.

10. *There was a ship*, Note again the direct and abrupt beginning of the strange story of the Mariner. Not minding the impatient unwillingness of the listener he plunges straight into his story. This gives a strange weirdness to the character and story of the Mariner.

quoth, (A.S. *Cwoedan*, to say)—This word is preferred to "said," as being more archaic.

11. *loon*, also spelt as 'lown'='clumsy idiot'—'worthless fellow'. *Cf.* Shakes., *Macbeth* V, 3. 'cream-faced *loon*.'

12. *eftsoons*, soon after; immediately (Der. *A. S. eft*, after). An archaism retained in the final edition. *Cf.* Spenser, *Faerie Queene* I. i:

"The Champion stout,
Eftsoones dismounted from his courser brave."

dropt, The fascination of the 'glittering eye' of the Mariner is enough (l. 3); so there was no longer any need of holding him *by the hand*.

13. *holds him with, etc.*, Note the simple repetition of these words for the sake of effect—a device for which Coleridge shows great fondness in his poetry. It has also to be noticed that the supernatural element is used from the very commence-

ment of the piece. Using no physical means the Mariner holds the wedding-guest by the power of his glittering eye.

15-16. *listens......will,* These lines were contributed by Wordsworth.

16. *hath his will,* (1) does what he wishes—'his' going with the Mariner or (2) has the will of the wedding-guest completely in his power. In the latter case 'his' would go with the wedding-guest.

20. *Mariner,* to fit in with the rhyme, this word has to be pronounced with its *archaic* spelling as *Marinere.*

21-24. *The ship was cheered, etc.,* This stanza gives us a very vivid and picturesque description of a ship starting on its voyage. We notice also the tremendous rapidity with which the story moves. So far the only words of the story we have had are—'There was a ship'—and without any other preliminary we now get at once into an account of the voyage itself.

21. *Cheered, sc.,* by the onlookers assembled on the quay.

cleared, passed beyond. *A nautical* term like 'drop' in the next line.

22. *drop,* put out to sea with the ebbing tide.

23. *kirk,* church. An archaic word still in use in many parts of Scotland.

24. *kirk...hill...lighthouse top,* 'As they move out to sea, owing to the convexity of the earth's surface the *highest* object (not the largest) remains visible longest.' (Brett) So first disappears from view the kirk, then the hill and then the lighthouse top (which is evidently situated on the hill). At the end of the voyage these objects reappear in reversed order (*vide* ll. 465-466).

25. *The sun......left,* they were thus sailing *southwards.*

26. *out of the sea......sea,* Note the verisimilitude of the description. The sun seemed to rise out of the sea and likewise to descend into it at the end of the day. This is exactly what one experiences on board the ship all surrounded by the sea.

27. *on the right,* the ship going towards the south, the setting sun would be to their right.

25-28. *The sun......sea,* "A whole day—and it is all sun, just what a sailor would see so much of at sea—is crowded into these four lines. This *economy of words,* but not of ideas,

because Coleridge's well-chosen words are almost without limit in their suggestiveness, is characteristic of the whole poem." T. F. Huntington. The whole picture is a "grand image of the loveliness, the isolation from all other created things, of that speck upon the boundless noiseless waters. Throughout the whole poem *this sentiment of isolation* is preserved with a magical and most impressive reality ; all the action is absolutely shut up within the doomed ship."—Mrs. Oliphant, *Literary History of England*, Vol. I.

30. *till... . noon*, this would be when they reached the line of the Equator.

31. *beat his breast*, *Sc.* to show his vexation and impatience. Later, however, he is so spell-bound by the strange narrative that far from offering any such interruption, he listens with rapt attention, uttering only occasionally exclamations of horror. (*Vide* ll. 79, 224 and 345.)

32. *bassoon*, A musical wind-instrument made of wood, emitting a deep bass note and having keys like a flute and eleven holes which are intermittently stopped with the fingers.

33. *paced*, moved with a slow stately gait.

34. *Red*, On account of her deep blushes.

35-36. *Nodding.........minstrelsy*, Beating time with their heads, the musicians (minstrelsy) passed gaily in advance of the bride. *Cf.* Coleridge's *Ballad of the Dark Ladie* :

> "But first the nodding minstrels go
> With music meet for lordly bowers.
> The children next in snow-white vests,
> Strewing birds and flowers !
> And then my love and I shall pace," etc.

37. *He*, This use of the 'redundant' pronoun for the sake of artistic emphasis (like the repetition of certain set phrases) is a feature of ballad poetry.

41. *Marginal Note :—Drawn*, Most of the commentators change *drawn* into *driven* ; and this emendation seems an improvement—since the idea is of the ship being *driven* or chased by the storm blast.

41. *he*, the storm (personified).

42. *tyrannous*, *Cf.* Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* I, vi. 36 :
'Like the tyrannous breathing of the North.'

43. *O'ertaking* (*wings*), Overpowering. The storm is

pictured as a powerful bird catching up the ship with her huge wings.

44. *chased...along*, forced the ship onwards in the Southern direction.

45. *With sloping...prow*, Once again we get a very realistic description of a ship overtaken by storm—when owing to the force of the wind, the masts bend and the prow (the bows or the fore-part of the vessel) dips into sea.

46. *As who*, like one who. This omission of the antecedent before the relative pronoun is a peculiarity of the energetic and rapid speech of the Elizabethan Age. *Cf.* Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* I, i. 94 :

"As who should say I am Sir Oracle."

47. *still treads...foe*, The pursuing enemy (here, the storm) was so close that his shadow was ever ahead of the thing pursued (here the ship), who therefore has to tread on it. Unable to turn round, being thus hard pressed, the pursued knows from the shadow that his enemy is close upon him and so to avoid the expected blow from him he 'forward bends his head.' (1. 48.)

50. *aye*, ever, continuously, without pause or break.

51-79. *And now...moonshine*, "The details of the voyage are all chronicled with such order and regularity, there is such a diary-like air about the whole thing, that we accept it almost as if it were a series of extracts from a ship's log." *H. D. Traill.*

53. *Ice mast-high*, Huge icebergs as high as the ship's masts.

54. *as green as emerald*, This is a correct description of the appearance of an iceberg which looks green on account of the reflection of the green waters of the sea.

35. *drifts*, Sc. of snow or sleet or rain (Lit. that which is driven—from A. S. *drefan*, to drive).

snowy clifts, the icebergs; clift is the rachaic form of 'cliffs'.

56. *Sheen*, brightness, luştre, *A. S. Scene*. 'Dismal sheen' gives us the poetic figure known as *Oxymoron*.

57. *ken*, know, discern; an old *A. S.* word.

61. *It cracked......howled*, A fine example of onomatopoeia—sound corresponding to sense.

62. *like noises......swound*, like the dismal sounds heard

in the head in a swoon or a fainting-fit. This is an instance of what is known in the language of literary criticism, as unreal imagery, *i.e.*, the use of a similitude wherein the concrete or the familiar is compared with the abstract or the uncommon. The poet Shelley is distinguished for his fondness for such unreal imagery. Cf. his *The Indian Serenade* :

"The champak odours fade
Like sweet thoughts in a dream."

It should be observed that here the effect of this 'unreal' simile is to produce the *fine effect of weird remoteness.*

63. *At length, etc.*, The incident was, as we know from the Introduction, suggested by Wordsworth. 'Albatross' is a sea-bird of very large dimensions, chiefly found in the Southern Ocean.

cross, sc., our track.

64. *thorough*, an archaic form of 'through'—used for metrical reasons.

67. *the food......eat*, the food that the Mariner gave to it, the like of which was not known to the bird. The original reading was :—

'The Marineres gave it biscuit-worms.'

The alteration is surely an improvement.

69. *The ice......thunder-fit*, the ice (which had locked us in) now broke with a noise like that of a clap of thunder.

70. *The helmsman...........through*, Note again the rapid abruptness of the narration.

Steered us through etc., the blocks of floating ice.

71. *good south-wind*, The Albatross has brought them good luck, and the wind changes, blowing from the South (Cf. 1.44) and takes them from the ("icy") regions of mist and snow to the North. Here the Mariner gives a disproportionately lengthy account of the bird as he is anxious to postpone coming to the point of his crime.

72. *did follow, sc.*, in their northward course.

75. *Shroud*, used generally in the plural form as 'the ropes of a ship that keep the masts in position.'

76. *Vespers nine*, nine evenings. 'Vesper' here is used in its original meaning of 'evening'. It is now used only in the form *vespers* for the 'evening service.' The number 'nine' is one of the mystical numbers. *Vide* note on 1.2.

79-81. *God save thee etc.*, This interruption has a very fine

dramatic effect. As the Mariner is about to reach the "fateful point in the story, his face becomes 'ghastly pale' and the wedding-guest naturally breaks in with an inquiry regarding the reason of this look of horror. This interruption is the finest instance in the poem of the poet's skill in both keeping up the reality of the story as a story told to an auditor, and in suggesting without narration, some point of appearance or description which he wishes to convey to us. Further, it wrings from the Mariner the reluctant and postponed avowal of his crime." (*P. T. Creswell*).

81. *cross-bow*, A weapon for shooting bolts, formed by fixing a bow crosswise on a stock, the bolts or arrows being discharged by pulling a trigger.

82. *I shot the Albatross*, each part of the poem concludes with a reference to the Mariner's crime, usually with an actual mention of the bird.

Part II (ll. 83—142).

Analysis. *The favourable south-wind persisted, but the atmosphere continued foggy and the sailors missed the bird of good omen and spoke out against the 'Ancient Mariner' for having slain the bird that had brought them good luck. When however the mist cleared away and the sun shone in all its resplendent glory, they thought the bird was an ill-omened bird and their companion had done well to kill it. For some time the ship continued smoothly on its course in excellent weather till there was a sudden drop in the wind and the ship was becalmed in a tropical region. Surrounded on all sides by salt stinking waters, the sailors suffered from the agonies of a scorching thirst and lost all power of utterance. They felt that the Vengeful Spirit of the Southern seas was following them and had brought them to this predicament. Now they cast looks of horror on the 'Ancient Mariner,' and to make him 'solely' responsible for the crime of killing the bird, hung the dead body of the Albatross round his neck.*

83. *upon the right*, because they are now proceeding northwards.

84. *out......he*, repeated from l. 26.

83-6. *The sun..........sea*, The wording of this stanza is practically the same as that beginning with l. 25; but the few changes are noteworthy as they clearly mark the changes in the

course of the ship. They are moving towards the North and so the sun rose to their right (formerly, as we know, it rose to their left) and whereas formerly it shone bright, now it was 'hid in mist.'

89-90. *for food......hollo,* Note again the repetition in the Ballad manner.

93. *averred,* declared as a thing that was true ; asserted. (Der. L. *Verus,* true.)

94. *That.........blow,* They judged the bird to be of good omen, since his appearance was followed up by the blowing of a favourable wind.

97-98. *Nor dim......uprist,* The fog and mist had vanished and now no longer dim or red in colour as it looked in the fog, the Sun rose so gloriously bright, that it seemed to resemble the very brightness of God's own face. Prof. Dowden makes the following comment on these two lines:—"How majestically the sunrise at sea is expressed......It is like the solemn apparition of one of the chief actors in this strange drama of crime, and agony, and expiation, and in the new sense of wonder with which we witness that oldest spectacle of the heavens, we can well believe in other miracles."—*New Studies in Literature,* p. 343.

98. *uprist,* uprose. This form of the word is used in Chaucer, but as a noun (Cf. *Knight's Tale* 1. 193.)

99-100. *Then all averred...mist,* Note the changing attitude of the Mariners. 'They judge of the deed and deem it good or bad, not on its merits or by any standard of right or wrong, but simply by the results it brings to them.' Now that the fog has cleared away and the sun shines brightly, the fickle-minded sailors believe that the Albatross was a bird of evil omen, that brought the fog and mist and so the killing of it was a good deed. Thus, as the marginal comment says, they make themselves sharers in the crime of its killing.

103-104. *The fair......free,* These two beautiful verses give a complete picture of the Ship softly gliding on the waters in fine weather. Note the alliteration.

104. *The furrow......free,* 'furrow' is the track of the ship (in the waters, as it moves along).—This would be clearly visible in fair weather; in a storm, no furrow follows free.

104. *The furrow followed free,* In *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) the line was printed:

"The furrow stream'd off free,"

and Coleridge added in a foot-note: "In the former eddition the line was—

'The furrow follow'd free';

but I had been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern." But in 1828 he restored the old line, because, after all, it seemed to him more musical.

107-108 *Down dropt the breeze etc.*, Note the change in the rhyme and contrast it with the active and hurried movement of the preceding two verses (105-106). Here "each line halts and the effect created by the whole stanza is a feeling of stagnation and helplessness." *P. T. Creswell.*

111-114. *All in a hot etc.*, The stanza gives a perfect picture of the "dull, red heat" of the tropical sun. It reminds 'one of some of Turner's pictures. This great artist, as well as Coleridge, had a keen eye for the subtle aspects of nature that hard and brilliant minds like Macaulay's find so uninteresting. For similar touches *see* ll. 171—180, 199—200, 263—271, 314—326 and 368—372.'—*Style.*

114. *No bigger than the moon*, The sun would so appear at mid-day in the tropics.

115-116. *Day after day etc.*, The repetition produces the effect of prolonged monotony. Each day was like the one preceding—there was no breath of breeze and no movement on the waters.

116. *stuck*, clung to one place.

117-118. *As idle......ocean*, As quiet and motionless as would be the picture of a ship. These lines are famous, as they aptly convey the effect of the perfect motionlessness of the ship. Hales compares *Hamlet*, II, ii, 502, when Pyrrhus' sword

"Seemed i' the air to stick:
So as *painted tyrant*, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter
Did nothing."

120. *and (all the boards)*, 'and' has here the force of 'and yet.' "Although there was water all round, yet the wood-work of the vessel (the 'boards') did 'shrink' owing to the withering heat of the sun."

121-2. *Water...drink*, because we were surrounded by only salt water. Our misery was like that of Tantalus of the Greek Mythology who was condemned to everlasting thirst. Cf. Milton *P. L.* ii, l. 610 *et seq.*

"And wish and struggle as they pass, to teach
The tempting stream, with one small drop to lose
In sweet forgetfulness all pain and woe............
............of itself the water flies
All taste of living wight, as once it fled
The lip of Tantalus".

123. *The very......rot*, expresses the extreme of the stagnation of the waters.

125-126. *Yea, slimy things...sea*, Mr. Creswell rightly speaks of these lines as "two of the most gruesome lines ever written. The repetition of 'slimy' adds to the extreme loathsomeness of the picture and the effect is further enhanced by the words 'with legs.' The poet uses the same image in his *The Destiny of Nations*—

As what time after long and pestful calms
With *slimy* shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific..............."

Cf. also Shakespeare, *Richard II*, l. iv. 32:

"Which woo'd the *slimy* bottom of the deep
And mocked the dead bones that lay scatter'd by."

127. *About, about*, reminiscent of the Witches' Scene in *Macbeth*, I, 3, 33 :

"The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go *about, about*."

In reel and rout, in confused, writhing movements. 'Reel' lit. is a spindle for winding thread ; thence as a verb=to go round ; to stagger. 'Reel' also is a name of a Scotch dance. "Rout" is a disorderly crowd as in *Lycidas*, 61 : "The *rout* that made the hideous roar."

108. *Death-fires*, the phosphorescent lights on the sea, supposed to be produced by the exhalations of certain seafishes. Scott refers to these in his *Lord of the Isles* :

"The mimic fires of ocean glow
Those lightnings of the wave."

Coleridge is possibly referring here to the luminous appearances occasionally seen about the masts and rigging of a ship

when it is becalmed. They are sometimes called by sailors 'St. Elmo's fires,' or 'corpse candles' and are believed by them to portend a death among the crew.

129. *like a witch's oils,* According to the mediæval ideas on Witchcraft, Witches produced flames of various colours by throwing certain oily liquids in the fire. Here the stagnant waters of the sea assuming different colours are compared to the Witches' oils, which had the power of producing a variety of coloured flames. With the idea Cf. Shakespeare, *Macbeth:* iv. i.

131. *assured were,* were firmly convinced (of the fact of the evil spirit following them).

132. *the spirit,* the avenging spirit of the Southern Seas, whose wrath had been aroused by the slaughter of the Albatross.

Commentary, Josephus etc :

It may be doubted whether S. T. C. intends his learned parade of authorities to be taken seriously. He had been a precocious reader even as a boy; and it is frequent enough to find a like display of learning made in mock seriousness. Josephus is the historian first of the Jewish War against the Romans, and then of the Jews in their national history; Psellus apparently wrote a dialogue on "The Operation of Demons."—(*P. T. Creswell*).

133. *Nine fathom deep,* Note again the use of the mystical number. For the singular form of 'fathom.' Cf. *five-pound* note, *The Tempest* I, 2 :

"Full fathom *five* thy father lies."

135. *utter drought,* the extreme of thirst.

136. *was......root,* was completely paralysed, had lost all power of movement.

138. *If......soot,* The slow rhythm of the verse as also the appropriateness of the 'prosaic' image is to be noticed. Usually the word 'soot' is pronounced as 'sut,' but rhyming as it does with 'root,' it is to be similarly pronounced here.

139. *Well-a-day,* The original phrase is 'well away,' of which the original form is '*weilawei*,' i.e., '*wa-la-wa*, woe ! lo ! woe !'—a very strong exclamation of sorrow. The word being entirely misunderstood became 'well away' (perhaps meaning '*weal* is away' i.e., prosperity is gone), and then 'well-a-day' which is taken to mean 'alas for the day !' (Brett.)

140-141. *What evil......young,* Because every one thought

fro

that by killing the 'sacred' bird I had brought all troubles on them.

Instead...hung, (To throw the whole guilt on me) instead of the usual cross, the sign of redemption, they hung round my neck the dead body of the Albatross. Note that this Part also ends with a reference to the crime of the killing of the Albatross. (*Vide* 1. 82 and note.)

Part III (ll. 143-223).

Analysis. *The Ancient Mariner and his mates had a most sickening time of it till the Hero saw 'a something in the Western sky' which approaching nearer assumed a 'certain shape' of a vessel which 'plunged and tacked and veered'—and to be able to hail it the Ancient Mariner bit his arm to suck in his own blood and exclaimed: 'A sail!—A sail!'—But to the horror of them all, the mysterious ship did not turn about to come to their relief; but moving without wind or tide came suddenly in front of the setting sun and appeared like the grating of a dungeon through which was peering the broad and radiant face of the setting Sun. On its nearer approach it revealed two sole inmates, a female Monster—the Nightmare Life-in-Death (with red lips, yellow hair and leprous skin) and her companion—Death. The two were playing at dice (for the soul of the Ancient Mariner) and their game ended in the victory of the former. Soon after, suddenly the sun descended and darkness prevailed over all the region—the crescent moon followed up by a star—an evil omen for the sailors—arose and all the companions of the Ancient Mariner dropped down one by one by his side.*

[*Note.* This part received the most thorough revision from the author.]

143-146. *There......eye*, A brief résumé of the wretched plight of the mariners.

144. *glazed*, of a glassy appearance, the appearance of the eye in great physical or mental trouble. The word is derivatively connected with 'glass' both being traced to *M. E. gtasen*.

145. *A weary time! A weary time!*, Notice how the repetition brings out the idea of the weary waiting of the Mariners for the coming of the wind.

err

[*element* : The word in the marginal note is used as='air.']

I beheld etc., It is the Ancient Mariner himself who is the first to see what appears as the possible means of escape. The vague appearance of the phantom ship gradually coming into view is described with wonderful art. First it looks like a 'something in the sky', then a 'little speck'—then it 'seemed a mist,' and then it took a 'certain shape.' The whole description brings out most vividly the gradual increase in size and distinctness of the newly-approaching object, which, however, it will be noticed, never assumes any distinctness. As Milton in his description of Death in *P. L.* ii shows himself to be a master of 'the vague and indefinite,' so does Coleridge here in his description of the phantom ship.

152. *wist*, knew—preterite of A. S. *witan*, to know.

153. *A speck, a mist etc.,* Aldis Brane remarks on this passage : "Coleridge was accustomed to wander of evenings on the shore to the north of Stowey, and watch a vessel emerging to sight on the open sea,—first a little spot between himself and the setting sun ; then a dark little cloud ; then a shadowy form, mast and yards, black as iron cross-bars."

155. *dodged etc.*, tried to hide from an invisible spirit of the water by sudden turns ('dodges').

156. *plunged*, dipped (the prow) into the sea.

tacked, changed its course abruptly to windward almost at right angles to the course followed before. A *nautical* phrase.

veered, This *nautical* expression is used of a *complete* change of direction, the turning *right about* of a vessel.

157. *black lips baked*, A very apt and appropriate description, portraying vividly the effects of the extreme thirst of the sailors.

158. *utter drought etc., Cf.* Part II, ll. 135-138.

159. *I bit my arm etc.,* I had to speak out to draw the attention of the crew of the approaching vessel and as a 'last, desperate' resource I bit my arm to imbibe the necessary moisture to enable me to speak out.

160. *A sail, a sail*, Cry of those on board the ship, hailing another ship.

agape, with mouths open with astonishment.

163. *Gramercy* !, contracted from *Fr. Grand merci*, great

thanks—used here as a mere ejaculatory exclamation without any reference to its original meaning.

164. *they for joy did grin*, "I took the thought of *grinning for joy* from my companion's (Berdmore of Jesus Coll., Cambridge) remark to me when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were fairly dead with thirst. We could not speak from the constriction till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same."—*Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

166. *as*, as if. This omission of 'if' after 'as' is a common ellipsis in poetry.

168. *Hither etc.*, 'Comes' is understood before this clause.

170. *Steadies*, moves steadily. Suddenly the Mariner perceives that the ship is moving steadily without any 'wind or tide'—an impossible phenomenon in life—and so his feeling of joy is changed to that of horror. *Vide* marginal note.

upright keel !, 'keel'—that part of a vessel running from one end to another on which the framework is built. This would remain 'upright' (without turning to right or left) in fair weather, when the sea is calm.

171. *The western......a flame*, A very realistic description of the appearance of the sea lit up with the flaming hues of the setting sun.

174. *broad, bright sun*, The sun always looks broad near the horizon on account of its refraction through the morning or evening haze. Cf. Shelley's *Euganean Hills*, where the poet describes the sun as 'broad, radiant, half-reclined.'

175. *that strange shape*, the spectre ship.

177. *straight*, immediately.

flecked, not in its usual sense of 'spotted', but as 'streaked'.

178. *Heaven's mother*, The Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ.

grace, mercy, favour—from L. *gratia*, favour.

179. *dungeon-grate*, the grating of a dungeon—referring here to the 'skeleton ribs' of the phantom ship.

he, the sun.

180. *broad and burning face*, the appearance of the sun at its setting. Cf. *supra*, l. 174 and note.

182. *nears and nears*, comes nearer (to us).

183. *glance*, shine with sudden and swift flashes of light.

184. *gossameres*, or as it is more commonly spelt, gossamers are 'the fine filmy web-like threads floating in the air on summer evenings'. The derivation of the word is uncertain. According to Prof. Hales the word is properly a *God-summer* 'from the legend that gossamer or god-summer (the threads of god) is the remnant of our Lady's winding-sheet, which fell away in fragments when she was taken up to heaven'. Prof. Skeat does not agree with this derivation and thinks the word is goose-summer, *i.e.*, 'the down from plants seen in summer and like the down on the back of a goose.'

restless, because moving with the least breath of the wind.

185. *Are those etc.*, This manner of describing adds to the realism of the description.

ribs, sc. of the skeleton ship.

Are those her ribs etc., Originally these lines stood thus :

Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd
The sun that did behind them peer ?
And are those two all, all her crew,
That woman and her fleshless Pheere ?
His bones were black with many a crack,
All black and bare, I ween ;
Jet black and bare, save where with rust
Of mouldy damps and charnel crust
They're patched with purple and green.

"The following stanza was found in Coleridge's handwriting on the margin of a copy of the Bristol (1798) edition of *Lyrical Ballads.*—DYKES CAMPBELL.

"This ship it was a plankless thing,
A bare Anatomy !
A plankless Spectre, and it mov'd
Like a being of the Sea !
The woman and a fleshless man
Therein sat merrily."

Regarding the changes *vide* the remarks of Swinburne and Dowden quoted in the *Introduction*, Pp. 25 & 26.

188. *Is that a Death ?......two?*, These questionings bring out most artistically just that effect of 'vague indefiniteness' of the phantom ship and all that belongs to it, which it is the poet's purpose to produce.

189. *that woman,* Life-in-Death, described in the following stanza.

A Death, a Figure of Death, a skeleton-figure. Cf. Shakes., *Merchant of Venice* II, vii :

"A carrion Death, within whose empty eye
There is a written scroll."

190-194. *Her lips......cold,* This description forms one of the most gruesome pictures ever penned in poetry. Note the horrible touches—*red* lips, *yellow* locks, *free* (immodest) looks and leprous-white skin.

free, bold, immodest.

193. *Night-mare,* used in its *orig.* sense as = 'female monster sitting upon and suffocating sleeper'; (thence—not here—the common use of the word, any oppressively frightful dream).

Life-in-death, These words recall the later life of the poet when under the baneful effects of the powerful drug (opium) which he took in large quantities, his will got paralysed and he led a kind of life-in-death—though living, yet incapable of any useful activity. We also in this connection recall the poet's *Epitaph* which he composed for himself in Nov. 1833 :

"Stop, Christian passer-by !
O lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found *death in life,* may here find *life in death.*"

Cf. also Dowden's remark: "The Nightmare Life-in-Death, she it was who, with her numbing spell, haunted Coleridge himself in after-days".

194. *who......cold,* who causes the blood of men to curdle ('thick' or 'thicken') with the 'cold' of fright.

195. *Hulk,* the body of an old ship unfit for service ; also as here, a heavy unwieldy ship. It is called 'naked' with reference to its ghostly appearance.

alongside, sc. to our vessel.

196. *twain,* two (A. S. *twegen*) used only in poetry. Refers of course to the Spectre Woman and her mate.

Casting dice, (Death and Life-in-Death) were gambling for the lives of the sailors.

197. *I've won,* This, as we see, is said by the Spectre-Woman, Life-in-Death ; and so it explains the kind of life that

the Ancient Mariner comes to lead—a life which is 'possessed' by Life-in-Death.

198. *Quoth*, said (*A. S. Cwoedan*) used only in poetry—and that too in the first and third persons, in the past tense and invariably followed by its nominative.

thrice, again the mystical number.

199. *rim*, Outer edge or border.

dips, descends below the horizon.

200. *At one stride...dark*, This happens in the tropical regions where there is usually no twilight—as soon as the Sun sets, darkness comes on.

201. *With far-heard whisper etc.*, Another reading of these lines found in some papers of Coleridge was—

With never a whisper on the main
Off shot the spectre ship.

This reading is generally regarded as more forcible and expressive.

202. *Off shot the spectre-bark.* The phantom ship vanishes as mysteriously and suddenly as it appeared.

199-202. *The Sun's rim etc.*, These lines are much admired by critics and commentators, as vividly descriptive of the sudden descent of a tropical night. *Vide* remarks of Traill quoted in the *Introduction.*

203. *sideways up*, as persons under the stress of fear (would look).

204-205. *Fear......sip*, Fear (personified) drank my life-blood from my heart, drinking as though from a cup.

206. *thick*, foggy, obscure.

white, betokening his (the steersman's) fear.

208. *From the sails......drip*, It was evidently an extremely foggy night.

209. *Clomb*, a strong form of the preterite of 'climb,' a form favoured by Tennyson. Cf. his *Passing of Arthur* :

"Where as he slowly turned and slowly *clomb*
The last hard footstep of that iron crag."

eastern bar, the edge of the sea in the East, the eastern horizon.

211. (*within*) *the nether tip*, the lower point of the crescent moon.

"'It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon.' (MS.

note by S.T.C., first printed in the four-volume editions of 1877-80). But no sailor ever saw a star within the nether tip of a horned moon." (J. D. Campbell.)

212. *by the star-dogged Moon,* by the light of the Moon, which was followed by the ill-omened star. Cf. preceding note.

213. *Too quick......sigh,* The agony of his dying companions is too acute ('quick') for audible expression—for groans and sighs, and they mutely curse him. Cf. Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* : '*Too deep* for tears.'

216. *Four times fifty,* This is more emphatic than two hundred and is more musical too.

218. *thump,* low, deep sound (produced by the falling of a heavy mass of matter).

222. *it,* The use of this redundant pronoun is for the sake of emphasis. Cf. Shelley's *Indian Serenade* :

"The Nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart."

223. *like the......cross-bow,* The comparison recalls the crime of killing the Albatross by the cross-bow—and thus this part too ends with a reference to the sinful slaughter of the bird.

Part IV (ll. 224-291).

Analysis. *The Wedding-Guest thinks that he is being spoken to by a Spirit and is in consequence filled with great fear. The Ancient Mariner reassures him about his corporeal presence and proceeds to narrate to him of his extremely solitary life on the 'wide, wide sea,' where he saw only ugly and loathsome objects around him. For full seven nights and days he remained in this wretched plight with the reproachful looks of his dead companions upon him. In this utter solitude and stagnation he longs for the gentle motion of the moon accompanied by one or two companion-stars. Under the soft and subdued light of the moon he sees the water-snakes and comes to be interested in their beauty and joy of living. His heart is filled with sympathy for these creatures of God and quite unconsciously he blesses them; and immediately thereafter is restored to him his capacity to pray; and the heavy load of sin is lifted off his mind.*

224-9. "*I fear thee......brown,*" These are the words of the Wedding-Guest, who ever since l. 38 has been completely

under the spell of the Ancient Mariner—only offering now and again interruptions such as this one expressing his fear and sense of horror at his strange companion and his stranger story. Cf. ll. 79—81 and note thereon.

225. *skinny*, fleshless (as that of the dead). Cf. l. 9.

226-7. *And thou......sea-sand*, "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth."—Author's own note in *Sibylline Leaves.*

long, tall. The Ancient Mariner looks 'long' because he is lank (thin and shrunken).

brown, the colour of old age.

ribbed, formed into ridges, being caused by the ebbing tide. The comparison suggests the 'withered and shrivelled' hand of the Mariner.

228. *glittering eye*, to which reference has already been made earlier; *vide* ll. 3 and 13.

230-31. *Fear not, fear not, etc.*, The Wedding-Guest was beginning to think that he was being spoken to by a spirit—not a human being—and the Ancient Mariner here re-assures him about his corporeal existence. He says that he did not die like his companions ('his body dropped not down').

232-3. *Alone, alone......sea*, Nothing can surpass this description of utter loneliness. The repetition of words and the alliteration largely help to produce the effect intended.

"The terror of this scene is equal to that of *Macbeth*, Act v. Sc. I, the Sleep-walking Scene; and *Hamlet*, Act iii. Sc. 3, where the King is at prayer. Cf. Tennyson, *The Palace of Art:*

"She howl'd aloud, I am on fire within;
There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?"

Hazlitt, alluding to the first time he heard Coleridge preach, in 1798, says: "When I got there the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and when it was done Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, 'And he went up into the mountain to pray, HIMSELF ALONE.' As he gave out the text his voice 'rose like a stream of rich distilled perfumes,' and when he came to the last two words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer

might have floated in silence solemn through the universe." A. J. George.

234. *Never a saint*, not a single saint. The indefinite article *a* has here the force of 'one' or' 'single'—a use common in Old English.

234-35. *Never a saint......agony*, This idea of holy beings interceding for the salvation of sinners is common among the Catholics and several other people.

236-9. *The many men so beautiful etc.*, These lines express the Mariner's sense of deep loathing for the miserable life-in-death which he is doomed to live along with the 'thousand thousand slimy things of the rotting sea.' To him, who is living a wretched life, his dead companions appear 'beautiful'. It is also to be noted that the Mariner's attitude is not yet that of repentance for his crime: he rather feels rebellious towards his doom; and in this he feels a deep disgust for the creatures of the sea.

238. *a thousand thousand*, Notice how the repetition secures the "emphasis" that is intended.

slimy, *vide* l. 125 and note.

239. *so did I*, The Mariner compares his miserable *life-in-death* existence to the many loathsome creatures of the rotting sea.

240. *rotting sea*, Cf. l. 123: "The very deep did *rot*."

241. *drew... . away*, *sc.*, in deep disgust.

242. *rotting deck*, the orig. reading was 'eldritch deck'; and eldritch is a provincial word of the dialect of the Northumberland signifying 'hideous' or 'ghastly'; and that is also the meaning the word "rotting" bears in this passage.

243. *tried to pray etc.*, Prayer must follow true penitence, and hence to the Mariner who has not yet repented of his crime prayer is impossible. Cf. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. iii. 39 *et seq.*

"Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."

245. *or ever*, '*Or*' meaning before, is a parallel form of 'ere' (A. S. *oer*). Each word could be used separately, but the original force of 'or' becoming forgotten or confused, the two words were used together in the emphatic form 'or ere,' 'or ever.' Cf. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, v. 103 :

"I'll drink the air before me, and return
Or ere your pulse twice beat."

Hamlet, I. ii. 183 :

"Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had met that day, Horatio." (P. T. Creswell)

245. *gusht*, or the more common, gushed—issued forth suddenly and effusively (like a copious stream). The word is a *M. E.* onomatopoeic word.

246. *a wicked whisper*, an evil, satanic prompting (that interferes with his penitence).

247. *heart*, spirit or conscience.

dry as dust, hardened and impenitent.

248. *I closed my lids*, *sc.*, in sheer disgust at the sights around me.

balls, eye-balls.

249. *like pulses beat*, *sc.* on account of his *feverish* disgust.

250-2. *For the sky......feet*, "The long drawn third line gives an impression of weariness, which is increased by retarding the stanza with an extra line and rhyme-word."—(Moody.) The 'long-drawn' line referred to above is written in anapæstic metre, and the effect (of weariness) is enhanced by the repetition of words in reverse order.

252. *And the dead......feet*, "He was tried of the endless stretch of sea and sky and yet if he turned his eyes from them, he saw only the dead bodies of his ship-mates." M. K. Barrow.

253. *cold sweat*, the sweat of death.

254. *reek*, lit. vapour or smoke; here, emit offensive odour (as does a dead body). This is another supernatural touch. His shipmates did not die a 'natural' death and so their bodies did not become subject to the usual course of decay and stagnation.

255-6. *The look......away*, Their eyes retained the look with which they had cursed me when dying (*vide* ll. 213—214) —and this adds to the wretchedness of his life-in-death existence which he is doomed to lead.

257-58. *An orphan's curse etc.*, The poet's idea is that the *curse of oppressed humanity*—especially when innocent and helpless ('as is an orphan')—is very potent and can have the power to bring to perdition a person who on account of his other virtues may be occupying a high place in heaven. These two lines, it will be noticed, have an aphoristic ring about them.

261. *seven days, seven nights,* We get again the use of the mystical number. Cf. *l.2* and note.

262. *And yet......die,* Death would have been a great relief to the Mariner in his present state ; but he could not obtain that relief because he had been won by the Nightmare Life-in-Death. (Note, however, that later he obtains his spiritual freedom.)

263. *The moving moon etc.,* The commentary on the margin—which itself is written with great beauty and power—must be read carefully to understand the poet's thought, which is of course not *completely* expressed in the poem itself. The Mariner in his state of miserable stagnation covets the calm and gentle onward motion of the moon and the stars—also 'their appointed rest in their natural homes.' This longing is the beginning of a mood of patience and prayer which, as we shall see ultimately, will work out his deliverance. Stopford Brooke in his *Theology in the English Poets* has the following interesting comments on this passage:—

"I read this description of the ship in moonlight at sea, in a tropic calm. The beauty of the illustration of the frost equalled by its truth, the motion of the moon is almost heard in the verse, and yet the whole is a finished picture. . . . But Coleridge is uncontent to leave the description of the sky without throwing round it the light of the higher imagination, and it is characteristic of the quaint fantasy which belonged to his nature that he puts the thoughts which lift the whole scene into the realm of the imagination into the prose gloss at the side—and it is perhaps the loveliest little thought in all his writings."

264. *nowhere did abide,* did not remain (fixed like himself) in one position but had a continuous onward movement. Cf. the marginal commentary and the preceding note.

265. *softly,* gently, peacefully. What the old man cares for after the rough and turbulent times he has seen is the *soft, gentle* movement of the heavenly bodies.

267. *bemocked,* was a great contrast to ; the prefix 'be' is intensive; also serves the purpose of converting a substantive into a verb (as in several English words—*bemoan*—*befriend*—*betide*).

sultry main, the burning waters of the tropical sea (in which the ship was becalmed). 'Main' is used in poetry for the sea.

268. *like April hoar-frost*, A vivid, exact and picturesque simile. The soft, mellow light of the moon is compared to April hoar-frost, which is of soft, white colour and is caused by the freezing of dew in April and produced in a *moderately* low temperature.

spread, spread out.

269-71. *But where...red*, This is one of the supernatural touches in which the poem abounds. Though the sun has set and the atmosphere is cool, yet the water on which is cast the shadow of the vessel is under an evil spell and always remains red hot.

270. *alway*, 's' is dropped to rhyme it with 'lay'.

273-80. *I watched the water-snakes, etc.*, This description of the water-snakes is extremely vivid and picturesque. The Mariner's interest in these creatures of the sea indicates his change of heart to God's creatures and must be noted to mark the evolution of his repentance. The region of the Pacific (near the South Sea Islands) where the ship was becalmed is known to be particularly infested with water-snakes of great brilliancy of colour. 'Gliding to and fro in sinuous coils.... blue and black, pink and black, green and black'—this is how they have been described by a lady traveller, who pertinently quotes M. Arnold:

"Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mails and bask in the brine."

275. *reared*, raised themselves up (above the water).

Elfish, An elf is a playful mischievous fairy or spirit. Here the word 'elfish' suggests both the playfulness and supernatural character of the appearance of the water-snakes. The word is used with similar significance by Scott in his *Lord of the Isles* I, xxii:

"Wild sparkles crest the broken tides,
And, flashing round the vessel's sides
With *elfish* lustre lave,
While, far behind, their living light
To the dark billows of the night
A gloomy splendour gave."

276. *hoary-flakes*, flakes of hoar-frost (*vide* note *supra* on l. 268; hoar is from *A. S. har*, white). Once again this image

of hoary flakes is a very apt and picturesque one. The light of the moon reflected from the rearing bodies of the water-snakes is described as falling off in 'hoary flakes.'

278. *their rich attire*, the brilliant colouring of the skin of the water-snakes is referred to here. Vide notes on ll. 273-80.

280. *track*, made in the water by the snakes.

281. *flash of golden fire*, a very beautiful line, describing the effect in the moon-lit waters of the sporting movements of the bright-coloured water-snakes.

282-288. *O happy living things! etc.*, This marks a very important point in the soul-history of the Ancient Mariner. The 'healing' influence of beautiful nature has worked on him and now he comes to be interested in the living beauty and joy of life of God's creatures. He feels a subtle, secret bond of sympathy for them and insensibly blesses them. As a result of this kindliness of disposition that has come upon him, his curse begins to pass off and he gets back the capacity and power of praying—which on account of his crime he had lost. (Cf. lines 234-35 and 244—47).

283. *might*, could (a sense of the word common in Elizabethan English).

284. *gushed*, *vide* note on l. 245.

285. *unaware*, unawares. His blessing the happy living creatures of God is an *instinctive* thing with him—conscious reason has nothing to do with it.

286. *my kind saint*, He attributes the change of heart to the influence of some benign holy being who takes interest in his spiritual well-being. Cf. l. 234 and note.

288. *self-same moment*, The poet here wants clearly to emphasise the fact that the breaking of the curse is entirely due to his change of attitude towards God's (lower) creatures. The very moment he is able to bless them, he is able also to pray. Here is the dramatic centre of the story, as in Shakespeare's five-act plays it is in the third act.

"From the soul itself muct issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
    Enveloping the Earth.
And from the soul itself must there be sent
    A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,

Of all sweet sounds the life and element."

Ode to Dejection
(A. J. George)

289. *so free*, quite freely or easily.

290-91. *The Albatross fell off etc.*, Once again towards the conclusion of this part also there is a reference to the Albatross. But here we learn of the removal of the Albatross from the neck of the Mariner which allegorically means his freedom from the bondage of sin. As every commentator has pointed out, this passage obviously suggests the following in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* :

"So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in; and I saw it no more.

"Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death."

(like) lead, a very heavy metal, suggesting the weight of the Mariner's sin.

Part V (ll. 292—409).

Analysis. *With the breaking of his spell, the Ancient Mariner falls into a soft slumber and is refreshed with a rain-fall ; all the pains of his body and mind vanish and he feels himself to be a 'blessed ghost.' The bodies of his dead companions are animated by a troop of blessed angels who work at the vessel till dawn; after that they cluster round the mast of the vessel, pouring forth rich strains of heavenly music. The ship continues to move gently till mid-day when again it gets locked in at one point in the sea. But soon enough it starts into motion with sudden abruptness and the A.M. falls into a swoon. In a state of semi-consciousness he hears two voices, one saying to the other that the A.M. was the man who killed the innocent Albatross, the favourite of the presiding spirit of the Polar region. To this the other (voice) replies that he (the A.M.) had done enough penance for his sin and would be still doing more.*

292. *O sleep! etc.*, According to Rossetti, nothing so simple and touching has ever been written on the subject of Sleep. The praises of Sleep have been sung by many poets—one

of the most eloquent and famous addresses is that of Shakespeare in his *Macbeth*, II, sc. ii :

> "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care ;
> The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast."

The poet Wordsworth describes it as—

> "The blessed barrier between day and day,
> Dear Mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health."

Cf. also Keats' *Endymion* :

> "Oh magic Sleep ! O comfortable bird
> That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
> Till it is hushed and smooth."

gentle, used in its old sense of *kindly*, *generous*, *noble*.

293. *from pole to pole*, from one end of the world to another.

294. *Mary Queen*, Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, called also 'Queen of Heaven.' Cf. 1. 178.

296, *slid*, softly descended; a very appropriate word here. Cf. 1. 379 and note.

297. *silly*, here=empty. The word has a very interesting history. *Orig.* it meant 'blessed' or 'happy' (from *O. E. selig*), next it meant 'innocent' or 'harmless.' Later it underwent a deterioration in meaning and came to signify one weak in intellect or stupid—and sometimes as here, empty or useless.

298. *so long remained*, sc., empty.

301. *throat was cold*, We know how parched it was through utter drought sometime ago before the spell was broken ; *vide* 1. 157.

302. *dank*, damp, moist.

303. *drunken*, obsolete form of 'drunk.'

still......drank, So dry and parched had grown my body that it continued for long to absorb the moisture as it fell on me.

305-308. *I moved...ghost*, The relief from physical pain (of heat and thirst) was so great that for some time I felt I was a spirit freed from the shackles of the body. Mr. A. J. George quotes the following passage from the author's *Notebook* in illustration of this stanza :

"Certainly there are strange things in the other world, and so there are in all the steps to it : and a little *glimpse* of Heaven,—a moment's conversing with an angel,—any ray of

God, any communication from the Spirit of Comfort, which God gives to his servants in strange and unknown manners, are infinitely far from illusions. We shall understand them when we feel them, and when, in new and strange needs, we shall be refreshed by them." *Cf.* also *In Memoriam*, xciv., xcv.

308. *A blessed ghost*, "*A blessed ghost*, as opposed to a lost, damned ghost; or a *blessed ghost*, as opposed to a very miserable living man."—*Herbert Bates.*

311. *Its sound..............sails*, The storm was at a great distance from the ship, but its sound caused the thin and withered sails to vibrate.

312. *sere*, dry and withered *(A. S. sear)*.

313. *The upper air............life*, The atmosphere over us was suddenly filled with 'myriads of flying insects' which were driven towards us by the rapidly approaching storm.

314. *fire-flags*, Mr. Creswell thinks that this refers to some electrical phenomena, lightning, possibly comets: but it seems preferable to take it as referring to large fire-flies common to the Southern seas.

sheen, bright, used here as an adjective. *Cf.* 1. 56, where it was used as a noun.

315. *they*, goes with 'fire-flags.' For this use of the redundant pronoun, Cf. *supra* 1. 37 and note.

316. *to and fro............out*, This line aptly describes the aimless, inconsequent movements of fire-flies or any other similar flying insects.

317. *wan*, pale—as compared to the brilliant light exhaled by the fire-flies.

danced, twinkled.

318-326. *And the coming wind etc.*, This is on all hands regarded as a very graphic and realistic description of a storm revealing the poet's 'sensitive appreciation of natural scenery.'

coming wind, oncoming storm.

319. *sedge*, a species of thin and tall reedy plant, growing largely in marshy places or by the water-side. It grows in clusters which emit the sound of a sobbing sigh, when the wind passes through them. Note the alliteration in this line.

321. *the Moon.. ....edge*, The moon making a very picturesque contrast to the black cloud is frequently seen by the side of a storm-cloud, when it is about to burst. Cf.

Christabel:

"The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky,
The moon is behind and at the full ;
And yet she looks both small and dull."

323. *cleft*, divided, split, broken—(when the storm actually descended).

324-26. *Like waters...............wide*, A very graphic and picturesque simile. The rapid and continuous succession of flashes of lightning is compared to a large column of waters falling from some high crag. The phenomenon described here is not that of *forked* lightning but that which is known as *sheet* lightning, which is described as running "in streams and rivulets, and when seen in photograph, looks like an outlined map of the Nile, with its many mouths leading to the Mediterranean."

325. *With never a jag*, with absolutely no break or division as in *forked* lightning [*jag* is *lit.* notch or tooth].

327-8. *The loud...............on*, A supernatural touch: though the storm waxed louder and louder, it never actually reached the ship and yet—by a supernatural agency—it started moving.

330. *The dead...............groan*, Another awe-inspiring touch.

332. *Nor spake...............eyes*, The dead men rise up and work the vessel—but do not speak and have a fixed look as of dead man.

333-334. *It had............rise*, The rising of the dead would have struck one as a strange phenomenon even *in a dream*, much more so in actual life.

333. *had been*, would have been—and old usage, frequently met with in the poetry of Scott.

335. *The helmsman.........on etc.*, The navigation of the ship by the dead men was the suggestion of Wordsworth.

336. *Yet never.........blew*, Cf. l. 327.

338. *Where.........to do*, each took his own proper place in the ship.

'Gan, did. This word is not an abbreviated form of 'began', though it is sometimes used as if it were.

339. *limbs......tools*, These words were used by the poet

to describe his own condition towards the end of his life.

340. *ghastly*, horrible, frightful, death-like. [*O. E. gaestan*, terrify; cognate with *ghostly*].

343. *The body etc.*, emphasising the fact that the action was only that of a 'lifeless tool,' only that of the body, purely mechanical.

344. *he*, refers to the body. Strictly speaking this is inaccurate (we should have the inanimate pronoun 'it'); but a body acting and moving as it does, makes the use of the 'animate' pronoun quite appropriate. In the original edition this line was succeeded by the two following lines (which were afterwards excised, presumably because they interfered with the general effect of the scene):—

"I quaked to think of my own voice
How frightful it would be."

345. *I fear thee etc.*, repeated from l. 224. (Part IV). The 'fear' of the wedding guest is only natural after what he has just now heard of this 'most strange story.'

348. *Corses*, properly, corpses,—used here in its old Latin sense of the word as=*bodies* simply (not dead bodies); Cf. L. *corpus*. Mr. Creswell quotes Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, I. iii, 42:—

"For he was strong and of so mighty *corse*
As ever wielded spear in warlike hand."

349. *But a troop......blest*, This is indeed an extremely beautiful touch in the story; a band of angels ('spirits blest') coming in response to the prayer of the Ancient Mariner and working the vessel *through* the bodies of the dead shipmates.

350. *When it dawned etc.*, Being angels and not mortals they *work* at night and sing in the day.

351. *Mast*, A long pole of timber, iron or steel standing upright in a vessel to support the yards, sails and rigging in general.

354-7. *Around......one*, This is a very fine description of heavenly music, emanating from the angelic beings. It is described as mounting up to the heavens ('to the sun') then descending back to earth, either in chorus ('mixed') or singly ('one by one').

358. *a-dropping*, the *a*—is=the old *on* (Cf. l. 163) and signifies 'in the act of.'

359. *heard the sky-lark sing,* The heavenly music sounded like the gladsome singing of a skylark, the favourite of the poets, 'a great songster known for its flight up in the sky upto the last point of vision and beyond', as also the joyous character of its singing. *Cf.* the two poems, Wordsworth's on the *Skylark* and Shelley's *Ode to the Skylark.* Originally, the poet wrote 'lavrock' for skylark. (This is the *O.* and *M.* English form of skylark.)

360. *that are,* that exist in the world.

jargoning, the confused mingling of the singing of many different birds. [Jargoning *lit.* means, "twittering" of birds and thence is used in common parlance for any confused unintelligible words.]

363. *Like all instruments,* like the symphony produced by the various instruments played upon at one and the same time.

364. *Like a lonely flute,* like the soft music of a flute played upon separately (without the co-operation of any other instrument).

366. *That......mute,* that filled all beings with such rapture that they remained silent listening to it.

367. *It ceased......noon,* The music stopped; but the sails were filled with it, and so it continued to be re-echoed from them upto mid-day. For the idea Cf. Wordsworth, *The Solitary Reaper:*

"The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more."

367-72. *It ceased......tune,* This stanza has been highly commended for its "musical form and melody and for sense and picturesque suggestion"—proving, as Mr. Huntington says, that 'for certain effects language is superior to both painting and sculpture.' Note the alliteration and the picturesque adjectives used—*hidden* brook, *leafy* month of June and *sleeping* woods.

369. *hidden brook,* a rivulet running through a forest hidden by the foliage of trees and shrubs growing around it.

370. *leafy......June,* so called because in this month (in the Northern latitudes) all the trees put on new leaves. It is a very picturesque word used also by Wordsworth in his *Skylark*: "All independent of the *leafy* spring."

371-72. *to the sleeping......tune,* The quiet sound of the soft rippling of the brook is in consonance with the 'sleeping' woods (the forest undisturbed by any high wind or other rough sound at night). In the original edition the following four

stanzas followed here; but these were omitted as unnecessary to the artistic evolution of the poem:

Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-guest!
  "Marinere! thou hast thy will:
"For that, which comes out of thine eye, doth make
  "My body and soul to be still."

Never sadder tale was told
  To a man of woman born:
Sadder and wiser, thou Wedding-guest!
  Thou'lt rise to-morrow morn.

Never sadder tale was heard
  By a man of woman born:
The Marineres all return'd to work
  As silent as beforne.

The Marineres all 'gan pull the ropes,
  But look at me they n'old:
Thought I, I am as thin as air—
  They cannot me behold.

377. *Under the keel*, below the bottom of the ship.

377-78. *nine fathom......snow*, repeated from ll. 132-3; *vide* note thereon.

379. *the spirit*, This was the 'avenging Spirit of Sea' that had been enraged at the slaughter of the Albatross; but now partly appeased by the penance and prayer of the Ancient Mariner, 'made the ship to go.'

slid, softly glided (past tense of slide). Cf. 296.

381. *the sails at noon......also*, As the commentary says, the Vengeful Spirit still requires vengeance and so at mid-day it stops moving the ship; 'left off their tune' refers to the 'rustling' sounds of the sails as the ship moves, or it may be referring to the music that was being re-echoed from them (*vide* 368-9).

383. *the sun, right up above the mast*, repeated from l. 113. There is a slight inconsistency here. In the commentary against ll. 111—3 we learnt that the ship had reached the line before it was becalmed and here we find that it is only now that it has been guided upto this Line.

384-85. *The sun......had fixed......ocean*, The ship was again fixed at one place ('locked in') in the ocean (at the Equa-

torial Line) with the Sun right above the mast.

'gan, *Vide*, note supra on l. 336.

she, the ship.

387. *backwards......length*, going forwards and backwards to the extent of half the length of the ship.

388. *uneasy*, uncertain, hesitating, unsteady.

389. *pawing horse*, horse 'pawing' the ground—signifying its impatience to go. This image of a 'pawing' horse is very forceful and picturesque.

390. *sudden bound*, refers to the sudden plunge of the becalmed vessel into the waters.

391. *It...... head*, The sudden movement of the vessel caused the blood to rush up to my brain.

392. *swound*, an archaic form of 'swoon'—used to rhyme with 'bound.'

394. *I have not*, I have not the power to, I cannot.

395. *living life*, as distinguished from the life-in-death which I was leading.

396. *discerned*, (clearly) distinguished.

397. *Two Voices*, These are, as the commentary explains, 'the Polar Spirit's fellow-dæmons, the invisible inhabitants of the element (the sea).'

399. *Him*, Christ.

400. *laid...low*, absolutely slaughtered.

402-03. *the spirit.........snow*, The Polar Spirit of the Southern Seas.

404. *loved*, The past tense charges the line with *pathos*.

loved the man, had a tender regard for the sailors (one of whom killed it). This intensifies the crime of the Ancient Mariner.

407. *honey-dew*, sweet sticky substance found on the leaves and stems of certain flowers and plants; thence, an ideally sweet substance. Cf. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* :

"For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

Part VI (ll. 410—513)

Analysis. *The Second Voice now explains that the ship is being driven forward by supernatural agency. On awaking from his trance the A. M. finds the ship sailing smoothly in calm weather and becomes conscious of his dead companions*

regarding him with hard, reproachful looks (which they wore at the time of death) and he cannot possibly take his eyes off them or engage in prayer. But soon enough this evil influence is destroyed and he is refreshed with the sight of the green sea and soft balmy breeze breathing over him from heaven; and he beholds as in a joyous dream his own native land. The angels leave the dead bodies of his companions and appear in all their native glory. The Pilot's boat with the Pilot, his boy and the saintly Hermit of the neighbouring forest, approach him and he is comforted that he will now confess his sin to the Hermit and have his soul cleansed.

411. *Thy......renewing*, continuing your reply in your soft voice.

412. *What......fast*, What is it that propels the ship to move so fast?

413. *What...doing*, What hidden force is there working in the ocean (which causes the ship to move so fast)?

414. *Still as......lord*, This is borrowed by the poet from his own *Osorio*:

"Oh, woman !
I have stood silent like a slave before thee."

The idea is that just as a slave has no will of his own but awaits the commands of his master, so also the ocean stood completely subservient to the wishes of a Higher power (here the Moon, *Vide* l. 417).

415. *hath no blast*, has no high wind (that propels the vessel).

416. *His great bright eye*, The ocean is personified.

417. *up to the Moon is cast*, This poetic fancy corresponds to the scientific fact of the moon controlling and causing the tidal phenomena in the ocean. Mr. J. D. Campbell believes that these two verses (ll. 416 and 17) have been borrowed by the poet from Sir John Davies' *Orchestra:*

"For lo ! the sea that fleets about the land,
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,
Music and measure both does understand:
For his great crystal eye is always cast
Up to the moon, and on her fixed fast."

418. *if he may know*, (asking) if he may know.

419. *she......grim*, She (the Moon) determines all condi-

tions of the sea—mild and rough. This, as pointed out above, is a fact in nature.

420-21. *how......him,* The sea has evidently a calm placid look—and the poet fancies the Moon to be looking on with a kind (gracious) regard on him.

422. *why,* here means, how.

424-25. *The air......behind,* The explanation is deliberately mystifying—the suggestion being that there is a supernatural agency at work, guiding the vessel (which removes the air from the front of the vessel and crowds it at the back to press it forward).

427. *be belated,* here—be too late; will not reach our abode ('Heaven') in time *(i.e.,* ere night fall*)*.

428-29. *slow and slow......abated,* The speed of the ship will go on diminishing with the gradual coming to consciousness of the *A. M.* (and if the spirits—of the Two Voices—time their flight with the vessel they will be belated).

430. *I woke, sc.,* out of my trance.

433. *The dead...together,* This again is a gruesome touch.

435. *charnel-dungeon,* A vault generally under-ground and below a church for the dead. Sometimes 'charnel' alone is used for charnel-house or charnel-dungeon. [*Der.* The word is ultimately to be traced to L. *caro,* flesh].

436-37. *their stony eyes.........glitter,* Mr. Creswell aptly compares *Macbeth,* III iv. 95 :

> "Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
> Which thou dost glare with."

438-39. *The pang, the curse etc., Cf.* ll. 214-15.

440-41. *I could not......pray,* As the commentary says the *A. M.*'s penance begins anew and he becomes conscious of the presence of his dead companions and their hard reproachful looks and at first he finds it impossible to pray.

442. *And now......snapt,* A second time the evil influence that was dominating him was broken and the curse was 'finally expiated.'

444-45. *And looked......seen,* I looked at a great distance on the ocean and by doing this I did not see what I might have otherwise seen (had I looked nearer me); *viz.,* the dead bodies of my companions. It will be noticed that the word

'yet' in these lines is rather awkwardly used as—'and by doing this."

446. *Like one.........tread,* This highly expressive simile, beautifully conveys the 'haunting dread' which the Ancient Mariner has of the dead bodies of his companions on deck. A simile such as this could be at the command of one who was *par excellence* a 'subtle psychologist.'

"This stanza introduces us into the realm of the supernatural much as does Shakespeare's Macbeth. It takes us to the primeval imagination as it created the spirits of good and evil which wait on man to reward or to punish. Mr. Stopford Brooke says : 'I never met a sailor whose ship had been among the lonely places of the sea who did not know of these hauntings.' For the expression of similar feelings on land read *Christabel.* In these days of utilitarianism, when we are taught that it is more important to know the law of the suction pump than to know *Hamlet*, it is well to get back to the great principle which underlies such art as the *Ancient Mariner*, *Macbeth*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Faust*, *The Prometheus* of Æschylus, and the book of Job." (A. J. George).

452. *a wind,* This was presumably sent by some benign *supernatural* agency as is clear from the following verse.

454. *Its path was not upon the sea,* It was not a physical breeze and so it produced no ripples or shadows ('in ripple or in shade').

in shade, refers to the little shadows in the waters caused by small wavelets or ripples. Cf. Tennyson, *The Lady of Shallott* :

"Little breezes *dusk* and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever."

456. *fanned,* blew with the gentle motion of a fan.

457. *meadow-gale,* a fine compound epithet signifying the breeze that is wafted over the meadows. 'Gale' is ordinarily used to express a violent wind-›-but its use in the sense of a gentle breeze is not uncommon especially, in poetry. *Cf.* Scott's *Marmion* :

"The evening *gale* had scarce the power
To wave it on the dungeon-tower."

like......spring, This verse indicates the poet's fine feeling for Nature and his keen appreciation of its refreshing and

healing power. *Vide* also ll. 369-72 and other passages and Introduction P. 14.

458. *my fears*, *sc*., of the miseries he has endured. The impression of these is not yet lost and mingles confusedly with the refreshing influences he is experiencing.

459. *like a welcoming*, *sc*., to a happier life (free from the horrors of his period of penance).

463. *on me......blew*, Once again the *A. M.* notices the fact that the breeze was not physical but sent by Heaven to soothe his spirit after his awful penance : it blew on him *alone*.

464. *Oh ! dream of joy*, At first the *A. M.* finds it difficult to realise that all that is happening to him is real and so he exclaims—"Oh ! *dream* of joy !"

465. *The light-house......kirk*, On his return home these things appear, as expected, in the reverse order. *Cf*. 11. 23, 24.

467. *countree*, archaic for 'country'—used for metrical reason to rhyme with 'sea.'

468. *drifted o'er*, were driven over (by the tide).

harbour-bar, formed by sand washed up by the tide to the mouth of a river.

470-71. *O, let...alway*, The *A. M.* fears that all that has now happened to him is a dream (*Cf. supra*, 'Oh'! *dream* of joy') and now he 'prays either to be sure he is awake and the dream is real, *or* to remain dreaming always, and not to wake and find it was a dream.' (*Brett*.)

472-479. *The harbour-bay, etc.*, As in Coleridge, the quiet of the harbour is the symbol of return to the life of love after the storms of sin ; so in Longfellow in *The Bridge* :

"I stood on the bridge at midnight,
  As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
  Behind the dark church-tower.

"I saw her bright reflection
  In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
  And sinking into the sea.

x x x x x

"And forever and forever,
  As long as the river flows,

As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes,

" The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear :
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here." (A. J. George)

" How pleasantly, how reassuringly the whole nightmare story is made to end among the clear, fresh sounds and lights of the bay where it began."—Walter Pater.

473. *strewn*, spread out (like a sheet of smooth glass.)

475. *shadow*, here—reflection.

steeped, *lit*. soaked (in any liquid substance) thence, pervaded, completely enveloped. Cf. Wordsworth's Sonnet *Upon Westminster Bridge* :

"Never did sun more beautifully *steep*
In his first splendour valley, rock or hill."

479. *Steady weather-cock*, 'Weather-cock' is a revolving pointer generally in the shape of a cock fixed on an elevated place usually the spire of a church, to show the direction of the wind. It is steady, because now it is perfectly calm.

480. *silent*, used as transferred epithet to express the stillness of the atmosphere.

481. *the same*, refers to the bay illumined with the (heavenly) light.

rising from, being reflected in. The Mariner, who has been watching the sea, first notices the angels 'in crimson colours' reflected therein.

482. *Full many shapes*, refers to the angelic spirits that had 'inspirited' the dead bodies of the Ancient Mariner's companions.

shadows, spirits having no substance or body. Cf. Wordsworth's *Laodaemia* : "But *unsubstantial form* eludes my grasp."

483. *crimson colours*, bright red colours used as an effective contrast to the *white* moonlight.

488. *flat*, because now the Spirit that had animated them had not left them—formerly they were described as 'standing.' Cf. 1. 433.

489. *holy rood*, the cross (Der. the same as rod). This was a common oath in the middle ages.

490. *a seraph man*, seraph—from *Hebrew saraph*, to burn, *lit*. means, the burning or shining one—was the name given to one of the *nine* orders of the angels of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Bible.

494. *signals*, signal lights such as thóse given by the officer of a ship on arrival to those on land.

497. *impart*, give out, utter.

498-99. *the silence...heart*, The silence such as this had an extremely soothing effect on me like that of a piece of music.

dash of oars, caused by the boat of the Pilot.

501. *Pilot's cheer*, (the cheering) welcome of the Pilot.

502. *perforce*, constrained by an invisible Power.

away, *sc.*, from the seraph-men.

500-504. *But soon I heard etc.*, According to Dykes Campbell in a copy of the edition of 1798 Coleridge crossed out the stanza which followed this, and substituted the following on the margin :—

"Then vanished all the lovely sights,
The spirits of the air;
No souls of mortal men were they,
But spirits bright and fair."

506-507. *It was...blast*, The joy that I experienced at the sight of the Pilot could not be destroyed ('blasted') by the presence of the dead.

509. *It is the Hermit good*, Note the change from the past to the (historic) present tense. What poetic effect does it secure?

Hermit, (In middle ages) a priest living in solitude for devotional purposes. (The old form of the word was 'eremite'—from Gk. *eremia*, desert.)

510-511. *He singeth etc.*, Cf. Wordsworth's *Poet's Epitaph* :

"He murmurs near the running brook
A music sweeter than his own."

512. *Shrieve*, usually spelt as shrive—hear confession and pronounce absolution (for the sin confessed). Note the Ancient Mariner's confidence in the ministrations of the Hermit. His attitude to life has changed and he has grown a man of deep faith and devotion.

513. *The Albatross' blood*, This part also ends with a reference to the Ancient Mariner's crime.

Part VII (ll. 514-625).

The Holy Hermit and his companions are struck with wonder at the strange appearance of the ship; and when their boat reaches the ship an awful sound issues from under the waters and reaching the ship divides the waters, and the ship suddenly sinks down. The Ancient Mariner, however, is saved in the Pilot's boat. His strange appearance, which bears the traces of his terrible experiences, throws the Pilot into a fit and causes his boy to go crazy and even shakes the Holy Hermit so powerfully that he falls to praying as a protection from the evil one. Taking charge of the oars of the Pilot's boat the Ancient Mariner safely lands and earnestly implores the Hermit to hear the tale of his sin and grant him absolution. Thereafter he relates to the Wedding-Guest that the penance of his life has been to travel from land to land and narrate his story to those who he feels needs must listen to him. He now ends with an exhortation to the Wedding-Guest to remember that love towards God's creatures is the highest form of devotion (to God).

514-20. *This Hermit etc.*, The description of the environment of the Hermit suggests the poet's belief in the 'healing' power of Nature. Cf, I. 272. *et. seq. and* note.

Which slopes down......sea, is situated on a slope or a shelving bank reaching down to the sea.

516. (he) *rears*, lifts up.

517. *Marineres*, For the spelling of the word, *Cf*. 1. 20 and note.

518. *Countree*, Cf. l. 467 and note.

519-522. *He kneels......stump*, It is interesting to compare this description of the Hermit with that of Thomas Parnell:

"Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend *hermit* grew:
The *moss his bed*, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
Remote from men, with God he passed his days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise."

520. *plump*, thick, well stuffed, soft.

521. *It is the moss, etc.*, it (the Hermit's cushion) consists of the old oak stump covered over with moss.

522. *rotted*, decayed.

stump, the part of the trunk of a tree remaining in the earth after the tree is cut down.

523. *skiff-boat*, a skiff or a small light boat. The word 'boat' is redundant in this compound epithet.

523. *Trow*, fancy, believe [an archaic word from O. E. treowin].

523-5. *Why, this......now*, These are the words of the Pilot.

524-25. *Lights etc.*, refers to the band of seraphs who

"Stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light." (ll. 494,95).

529. *Warped*, decayed, shrunk, twisted out of shape. [From old Norse *Vorpa* to throw the shuttle in weaving; hence, to twist out of shape.]

530. *how thin...... sere*, Cf. l. 312.

532-3. *It were brown, etc.*, Notice the overflow of one stanza into another. This is known technically as *enjambement*.

533-7. *Brown skeletons, etc.*, A very appropriate simile wherein the thin and sere sails of the ship are compared to the dry and withered leaves of trees that lie scattered on the banks of the rivulet running through a forest in winter time. The whole stanza presents a fine picture of a scene in Nature drawn with a touch so delicate and true that it appears as an exact transcript from life.

skeletons of leaves, poet's phrase for the dry withered leaves (of trees thrown on the ground in the autumnal season.)

535. *Ivy-tod*, ivy bush. Cf. Tennyson, *The Miller's Daughter*:

"The wealthy Miller's mealy face,
Like the moon in an ivy-tod."

536. *Whoops*, shouts (insultingly). An onomatopoeic word expressive of the sound of the owl. Cf. Coleridge, *Christabel*, Pt. I, ll. 2-3:

"And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu-whit!—Tu whoo!"

537. *that......young*, 'That' goes with the wolf (the male wolf) known for eating its young. Mr. Creswell wrongly thinks 'that' refers to the 'owlet'.

538. *It*, refers to the ship.

540. *afeard*, An obsolete form of 'afraid'—frequently used

in Shakespeare's works.

Push on etc., The Hermit—as a religious man—so far shows no fear and encourages the Pilot to push on to the ship.

543. *Nor......nor*, An old form for, "Neither......nor." Cf. 1. 116.

544. *Beneath*, below on its side.

546-9. *Under...lead*, Note that this mysterious disappearance of the ship is quite in consonance with the supernatural tale. The ship with its ghastly burden had to be got rid of somehow, Coleridge adopts the device of sinking it, crew and all. Here at any rate he does not follow Paulinus' story (*Vide Intro*: Genesis and Sources). Longfellow makes his *phantom ship* fall away piecemeal, resolving itself into the air.

"Then fell her streaming topmasts,
Hanging strangled in the shrouds,
And her sails were loosened and lifted,
And blown away like clouds.

And the masts, with all their rigging,
Fell slowly, one by one,
And the hulk dilated and vanished
As a sea-mist in the sun!"

546. *rumbled on*, made a low, heavy and continuous sound.

547. *dread*, here, dreadful, terrifying.

548. *split the bay*, cut or divided the waters (of the bay).

549. *like lead*, Cf. 1. 300.

550. *stunned*, stupefied, confounded, rendered senseless.

552. *seven (days)*, Again the use of the mystic number.

554. *swift as dreams*, An abstract and unreal image. Cf. 1. 62 and note.

552-6. *like one......boat*, The *A. M's* body (quite miraculously) floated on the waters like that of one who had been drowned *seven* days—and he was at once placed in the Pilot's boat.

whirl, of waters caused by the sinking ship.

556-7. *upon......round*, A most vivid and realistic touch. The light boat of the Pilot moves round and round on the whirl of waters caused by the sinking ship.

559. *Was......sound*, was re-echoing (the supernatural sound).

560-6. *I moved my lips, etc.*, "With what consummate

art are we left to imagine the physical traces which the Mariner's long agony had left behind it by a method far more terrible than any direct description—the effect, namely, which the sight of him produces upon others." [Traill, *E. M. of Letters Series.*]

562. *the holy Hermit, etc.,* Even the hermit is affected by the sight of the *A. M.* and falls to prayer.

564-7. *The Pilot's......fro,* The Pilot's boy goes mad as is shown in his senseless laughter and rolling eyes.

569. *The Devil etc.,* The Pilot's boy takes the *A. M.*—so frightful is his look—for the Devil.

573. *scarcely......stand,* so shaken he was by the sight of the *A. M.*

575. *crossed*, made the sign of the cross (as a protection against the influence of any evil spirit).

578. *frame*, here=body.

wrenched, twisted violently.

581. *left me free,* Telling his tale frees the Mariner of his woeful agony. Cf. Wordsworth, *Immortality Ode*,

'A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.'

The redundant 'woeful' is used for the sake of emphasis.

582. *at an uncertain hour*, a time of which I have no previous knowledge.

584-6. *And till my ghastly tale etc.,* This constitutes the penance of the *A. M.'s* life. He can work out the expiation of his sin by narrating it to his hearer and urging upon him the great lesson of love for all things and faith in God which he has learnt through his sin and suffering. Thus alone can he find comfort. This then explains his strange behaviour towards the Wedding-Guest, in the commencement of the Poem.

ghastly, fearful (cog. with ghostly). Cf. 1. 340 and note.

586. *like night*, A highly imaginative simile. The *A. M.* compares his wanderings from land to land to the passage of night from one country to another. This recalls also the legend of the Wandering Jew.

591-6. *What loud uproar etc.,* "Notice with what dramatic skill this poem is *set*. The mariner's tale—gloomy, weird, supernatural—stands out in compelling contrast against the scenery of the bridal—cheerful, domestic, humanistic. If you

look especially at the marvellous way in which the supernatural element is introduced, you will perhaps agree with me that no poet—not even the mighty Shakespeare himself—has so brought home to us those spiritual existences which, to a devout mind, attend our every movement and preserve our going out and our coming in."—*Syle.*

"The recurrence of the sounds of the feast serves, as before in the opening stanzas, the purpose of enforcing the reality of the setting of the story, and so of helping to create the impression of the reality of the story itself. But here there are two other points which are at least as noteworthy. First, that the noise of the feast serves to point a contrast with the 'little vesper bell,' which alone is of importance to the Ancient Mariner and, as we see, to the Guest as well; and secondly, that the Wedding-Guest no longer feels any interest in the wedding, any eagerness to join in the mirth and pleasure of the feast (contrast 31 ff., *v.* later, l. 620); his sole interest now is in what he has learned (l. 590); and the sounds fall idly on heedless ears." *P. T. Creswell.*

595. *vesper bell,* the bell ringing for vepsers (evening service) [from *Hesperus,* Venus, appearing as Evening Star].

597. *O Wedding-Guest! etc.,* This is indeed a very piteous, powerful appeal.

598. *alone......sea,* repeated from l. 233. The lesson of the necessity of Love and human fellowship was learnt by the Spirit of the *A. M.* through experiencing the tortures of utter solitude.

603. *to walk together etc.,* Cf. Tennyson, *The Two Voices,* where the voice of Doubt is silenced by a similiar sight of people pressing on to 'God's house' (Cf. ll. 412 and ff, of *The Two Voices*).

604. *goodly company,* The lesson of the story is that of Love, and here the poet is emphasising one of its aspects, viz., that of human fellowship. The poet is evidently a great believer in congregational prayer—and presents a fine picture of people praying together in the following lines.

612-16. *He prayeth,* Famous ll. oft-quoted, comprising the moral of the poem—We please God best when we love God's creatures, both great and small; and so love for God's creation is the highest form of prayer. It is to be noticed that this tender interest in and regard for lower forms of life was one of the

most prominent features of the Romantic Era and is found largely reflected in the poetry of the period. For the idea, Cf. Coleridge's *Religious Musing*, ll. 105 *et seq.*:

"There is one Mind, one omnipresent Mind
Omnific. His most holy name is Love.
Truth of subliming import! with the which
Who feeds and saturates his constant soul,
He from his small particular orbit flies
With blest outstarting! From himself he flies,
Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation; and he loves it all,
And blesses it, and calls it very good!
This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!
Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim
Can press no nearer to the Almighty's throne."

Also Cf. Wordsworth's *Hart-Leap Well*, P. II.

"The being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals;
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Also Browning's *Saul*,

"God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear;
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here."

618-19. *eye is bright etc.*, Once again at the conclusion of the poem the prominent features of the *A. M.'s* external personality, his 'bright eye' and hoary 'beard,' are strikingly pointed out.

623. *forlorn*, here—bereft ['lorn' is an old form of the past participle of *lose* and 'for' is an intensive prefix].

624. *sadder*, used here as—more serious—a use of the word very common in Shakespeare.

625. *the morrow morn*, the next morning by which he had revolved the story he had heard and the lesson that had been so deeply impressed on him, and thus grown in wisdom and seriousness.

PARAPHRASE.

Part I (ll. 1-82).

An Ancient Mariner meeting three persons ('bidden to a wedding feast') detains one of them, who impatiently enquires—'I beseech you by your grey beard and shining eyes to tell me, why you are detaining me from the wedding feast, where the doors are thrown wide open and I am being awaited, being the nearest relation of the bridegroom. The feast is quite ready, the guests are assembled so that you can hear the sounds of their merry-making.' The Mariner, however, paying no heed to the young man's words, takes his hand into his fleshless and bony one and straightaway starts his narrative with the words—'There was a ship.' But the Wedding-Guest calling him a 'grey-beard loon' impatiently asks him to take off his hand and keep himself away. The Mariner at once drops down his hand, but all the same retains his power over the Wedding-Guest with his 'glittering eye'—so much so that he remains absolutely motionless and listens to the Mariner's tale like a simple child of three years. Thus the Mariner has the young man completely under his control. The Wedding-Guest has no other go but to sit on a stone and hear what the Mariner has to say; and the latter continues his story thus :—"As our ship passed out of the harbour, we were cheered by the onlookers; and as merrily we put out to sea with the ebbing tide, slowly disappeared from our view the church, the hill and the top of the light-house. The sun rose out of the sea on our left, and shining brightly the whole day, descended back into the sea on our right. Every day it (the sun) rose higher and higher till it got exactly over the mast of our vessel at midday." At this point the Wedding-Guest heard the loud notes of the bassoon (that was being played upon at the feast) and beat his breast because he could not participate in the festivities. He saw the bride moving with a stately gait and looking like a red rose on account of her blushes; and the musicians beating time with their heads as they passed gaily in advance of the bride. He, however, simply beat his breast, as he had no other alternative but to hear the old man, who thus resumed :—"And

now a terrific storm overtook us and drove us towards the South. Owing to the force of the gale the masts of the ship stooped and the prow dipped into the sea and the ship bent her head forward as it were to avoid the crushing strokes of her enemy (the storm) which was closely pursuing her with great noise and bluster. Thus the ship unceasingly fled southward, chased by the roaring storm. Shortly after we came to the region of mist and snow and it got extremely cold; and here huge icebergs which appeared as green as an emerald, passed floating by us; and these icebergs shone through the driven mist and snow with a dull dismal light; and here we got locked in by fields of ice and could not see any figures of either human beings or animals. We were entirely surrounded by ice, which produced fearful sounds like those experienced in a fainting-fit. At last a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, crossed the track of our ship and we greeted it with great joy, as if it was a fellow-Christian. It partook of the food that we gave to it, the like of which it never had taken before, and kept flying round our ship. Soon after this the ice that had shut us in broke with the noise of a clap of thunder and the man at the helm guided us safely through the dangers of the floating ice. Just then also arose a favourable wind from the south and the Albatross kept following us towards the North and responded to the sailors who would call it for play or for food. For nine evenings we saw it in mist or cloud perched on the mast or the rigging of the ship, while the moon shone with its glimmering light through the foggy atmosphere." At this point the Wedding-Guest broke in with the words: "May God save you from the fiends who seem to be tormenting you! Why have you assumed such a ghastly look?" To this the old man replied: "(It is because) I shot the Albatross with my cross-bow."

Part II (11. 83-142).

"The Sun now rose out of the sea upon our right-hand side and was yet enveloped in mist, and (in the evening) it descended back into the sea on our left-hand side. The favourable south wind continued to blow from behind us; but (now) no sweet bird followed us responding to the call of the sailors for play or for food. And all the shipmates felt that I had done a very wicked deed which would bring misery on them; for wretch that

I was, I had killed the bird that had caused the blowing of the favourable breeze. Soon after this the sun rose, not dim or red in hue as in the fog, but transcendently bright like God's own glorious face, and this made the sailors say that I had killed the bird that brought the fog and mist and it was a right thing to kill such ill-omened birds.

"The favourable wind continued to blow causing the white foam to fly up from the waves, and (with the ship gliding smoothly on the quiet waters) the track made by the course of the ship continued clearly visible. And we were the first that had, as it were, invaded the silence of that silent sea. After a short time quite suddenly there was a drop in the breeze and the sails of our ship immediately hung down listlessly. We grew intensely sad and spoke only to disturb the utter silence of the s෴ ; and at mid-day in a hot and copper-coloured sky the red sun appeared exactly over our mast-head so small that it looked the size of the moon. Each day was like the one preceding. We stuck to one place and there was absolutely no breeze and no motion in the waters so that our ship in her utter motionless-ness looked like the picture of a ship. We had water all round ut the heat was so intense that the woodwork of our vessel egan to shrink ; and although we had plenty of salt-water all ound, there was not a single drop of drinkable water to be had. he waters of the sea began to stagnate and stink and on this ilthy sea most loathsome creatures started creeping about. The hosphorescent lights on the sea began at night to dance about s in confused whirling movements ; and the (stagnant) waters f the sea shone like a witch's oils with different colours. And ome of the sailors saw in their nightmares the avenging spirit f the sea following them nine fathom deep from the regions of ist and snow. And the tongue of every one of us was com-letely paralysed on account of extreme thirst ; and we were as nable to speak as if our mouths had been choked with soot. las! every one—young and old—now regarded me with looks of orror ; and (to throw the whole guilt of the killing of the bird me) they hung about my neck the dead body of the Albatross place of the usual cross."

Part III (ll. 143-223).

"We had a most weary time of it. The throats of us all

got parched and our eyes assumed a glassy appearance. And in this miserable state when each one of us was leading a most tired and sickening existence, I, happening to look towards the west, saw something in the sky—which at first looked a little speck, then assumed a larger but still hazy appearance; later, it grew and grew till ultimately it assumed a certain shape. Thus what was at first a speck and a hazy phenomenon grew to a certain shape; and it approached us nearer and still more near; and moved with many sudden and sharp turns, as if it was eluding the pursuit of a Spirit of the waters. We could neither laugh nor weep on account of the extreme of thirst which had blackened our lips and dried up our throats; and so we stood, quite dumb till I bit my arm and sucked my blood and hailed the (new) boat with the words —'A sail! A sail!' My fellow-sailors with their parched throats and blackened lips heard me with amazement and expressed their joy and gratitude by grinning; and thereafter all of them took a deep breath imitative of the process of drinking (water). (Soon after) I cried out to my mates that the boat was not turning about towards us for our relief and drew their attention to the astounding fact of its moving steadily without 'wind or tide.' At this time the day was coming to its close, and the sea in the west was lit up with the flaming hues of the setting sun; and the broad and radiant sun seemed to be resting, as it were, on the edge of the waters. Just at that time that strange object came between ourselves and the (setting sun). And as a result thereof the sun at once appeared as if it was streaked with bars and seemed to be looking with his broad and fiery face through the grating of a dungeon. And in great mental trepidation I felt that the strange object was coming nearer and nearer to us; and what seemed to be her sails shone with flickering flashes in the light of the sun like gossamers moving with the least breath of the wind. And further I seemed to feel that the bars through which the sun was looking at us as through a dungeon-grating were the sails of the mysterious ship. And I dimly became conscious of first a Woman and thereafter a Death's figure as the two occupants of the boat and suspected that these two were the sole crew of the ship and the latter was perhaps the mate of the former. The woman had red lips and had a bold immodest appearance: she had yellow locks of hair and her skin was

leprous-white. It was (I felt) that female monster, Life-in-Death, which freezes with fright the very life-blood of human beings. The huge, unwieldy ship came alongside us and its two inmates were found gambling with dice—till the female monster whistling three times exclaimed that the game was finished and she had won it. Thereafter the edge of the sun sank beneath the horizon and immediately darkness descended on us and a star started into view; and with a swift stealthy movement heard far and wide over the sea, the phantom ship disappeared. We listened and slowly, fearfully looked up sideways.

"Fear seemed to suck up all the life-blood from my heart. It was a foggy night and the stars shone dimly. The face of the man at the helm was seen by the light of the lamp to be white. The dew began to fall by drops from the sails of our vessel till the crescent-moon rose from the eastern horizon with one bright star within its lower end. Under the light of this moon followed by a star, my companions looked at me in great agony—agony that was too acute to be expressed in sighs and groans—and hurled curses at me with their glances. With a low thumping sound each one of the two-hundred companions of mine dropped down one after another without uttering a single sigh or groan. The souls of them all flew from their bodies (I could not say) to eternal bliss or eternal woe: and every soul passed by me with the whizzing sound of my own cross-bow."

Part IV. (ll. 224-291.)

At this stage the Wedding-Guest interrupted the Ancient Mariner, tellng him that he was afraid of him because of his fleshless hand and his long and lean body, which was browned and wrinkled like the sea-sand;—he was also afraid of him because of his glittering eye and his browned fleshless hand. Thereupon the Ancient Mariner re-assured the Wedding-Guest, telling him that he did not die with his shipmates;—and further continued: "I remained all to myself with absolutely no companion on the wide waters of the sea; and no saintly being was moved to compassion at the agony that I was enduring. All my beautiful companions lay dead before me. I alone lived on with the many ugly and loathsome creatures of the sea.

"I looked upon the stagnant waters of the sea and had to take off my eyes in sheer disgust; and then looking on the

hideous deck found on it the dead bodies of my companions. I looked up to the Heavens and tried to pray; but before any prayer issued forth, some wicked influence came over me and left my heart in hardened impenitence.

"In sheer disgust at the sights around me, I closed my eyes and kept them closed so hard that my eye-balls began to beat violently like my pulse; for the sight of the endless stretch of the sea and the sky completely sickened me; but then if I turned my gaze from this sight, I saw only the dead bodies of my companions gathered at my feet. Their limbs were covered in the sweat of death; and their bodies did not decay or emit any foul odour; and their eyes retained the look with which they had cursed me when dying. The curse of an (innocent and helpless) orphan has the power to bring to perdition even a person occupying an exalted place in heaven: but more potent still is the mute curse of a dying person: and for full seven days and nights I lived under the effects of such a curse and yet did not obtain any release through death from this wretched existence.

"The Moon travelled up in the sky and (unlike me) did not remain stationary at any one place. She had a few companion-stars with her and moved with a gentle motion. Her soft and mellow light, which was such a contrast to the heat of the waters of the sea, spread itself out like the frozen-dew of April. But wherever fell the shadow of our ship, the water, under an evil spell, remained burning red hot. Beyond this shadow of the ship, however, I watched the water-snakes and saw that as they moved about and raised themselves above the waters, the weird light that fell on their bodies fell off like flakes of hoar-frost. Indeed it was a wonder to behold their gorgeous skins emitting various bright colours—blue, green and black—as they sported about in coils—and every track through which they moved shone with rich brilliancy.

"Oh! they were indeed happy living creatures and it would be difficult to describe their beauty. Somehow my heart was filled with intense sympathy for them and insensibly I blessed them. Surely some benign saintly being took compassion on me and (the result was) I felt so sympathetically drawn to this (beautiful and joyous) creation of God. Immediately thereafter was restored to me my capacity for prayer; and the body of the Albatross which hung as a dead weight round my neck, easily

fell off and sank like lead into the sea."

Part V (ll. 292—409)

"Oh ! Sleep is indeed a kindly goddess and is beloved all the world over; and may the Queen of Heaven be praised for sending me this kindly sleep that softly stole over me. I dreamt that the empty buckets on the deck, which had remained unfilled so long, were filled with dew, and when I awoke, it began to rain. Now my lips got wet and my throat too ceased to be dry and parched—and all my clothes were soaked in moisture. During my sleep I must surely have taken in water and my body yet continued absorbing more and more of it. I moved and felt so light that I could hardly feel the weight of my body, and I thought I had died in sleep and was now a happy spirit freed from the shackles of the body.

"Soon after this I heard the sound of a loud storm, but it did not come near us; all the same its sound caused the thin and withered sails of my ship to vibrate. The air above the ship was suddenly filled with myriads of insects and several luminous fire-flies which flitted about hither and thither with the pale stars twinkling between them. The oncoming storm made a louder noise and the sails of the ship produced a sighing sound like that caused by the blowing of the wind through the sedge. It began also to pour from a dark cloud having the Moon by its side. This dark cloud was soon split up and yet the Moon continued to remain beside it. Lightning descended without any break like a swift column of waters rushing down a lofty crag. This roaring storm never reached the ship, but (quite miraculously) she began to move and the dead men suddenly groaned in the light of the moon and the lightning. They groaned, stirred and then rose up but did not speak, and retained their 'fixed' looks. Sure enough such a sight of the rising of the dead would have appeared as a strange sight even in a dream. The man (who used to be) at the helm, now took charge of it and the ship moved on, although there was not a breath of breeze. All the sailors took their usual places and worked at the ropes; but they did all this quite mechanically, so that we looked indeed a very frightful band of sailors. The body of my nephew stood close to me and worked with me in pulling the same rope, but he did not say a single word to me."

At this the Wedding Guest again expressed his sense of fear; but the Ancient Mariner asking him to be calm said to him, "Don't you think that the spirits of my dead companions, who had left their bodies in great anguish, revisited them; but those bodies were animated by a band of angels, who as soon as the day began to dawn, suddenly stopped working (at the vessel) and gathered together round the mast, and poured forth sweet strains of music. The atmosphere was charged with their rich music, which rising upto the sun, descended again to the earth at times in chorus, at times singly. Sometimes it descended from the sky like the (joyous) singing of the skylark, sometimes again it sounded like the confused harmony of all the little birds of creation, sometimes it resembled the symphony produced by the playing of all musical instruments and sometimes it appeared like the soft music of a solitary flute, and sometimes again it resembled the song of an angel filling the whole heaven with silent rapture. (After a time) it ceased; but the sails of the ship continued till mid-day to re-echo this music which sounded like that produced from a hidden brook that in the month of June (when trees appear in their new foliage) produces a subdued music with its ripples as it moves along at night through the quiet forest.

"We continued saiiing quietly till noon though there was absolutely no breeze, our ship being moved slowly and smoothly from below by the spirit who had come from the region of mist and snow and was now softly gliding on nine fathom under the bottom of the ship. (At mid-day) the ship again got locked in at one place in the ocean with the sun shining right above the mast; but soon enough she began to move, at first with a short, hesitating movement, backwards and forwards, till at last quite abruptly it moved with a sudden plunge into the waters like an impatient horse when it is let go. This sudden movement of the ship sent the blood into my brain causing me to fall into a swoon. I cannot say how long I remained in a state of unconsciousness, but ere my normal life was restored me, I seemed to hear two different voices holding the following dialogue:—One of them exclaimed: 'By Christ, this is the man who slaughtered so cruelly the innocent Albatross—the bird who was beloved by the presiding spirit of the Polar region and who also loved even the (cruel) man who

killed him.' The other voice was a sweet voice—as sweet as honey-dew—and it said : 'This man has done enough penance for his sin and will do still more later on.'"

Part VI. (ll. 410—513).

"Thereupon the First Voice asked the other to speak again with his sweet and gentle voice and explain to him as to why the ship was moving forward so rapidly and what hidden force there was in the ocean to propel the ship in that manner. To this the Second Voice answered that it was no high wind that caused the ship to move ; and the ocean was silently watching the Moon like a slave awaiting the commands of his master—so that he might know in what direction he was to go ; for it was the moon that regulated all the aspects, calm or stormy, of the sea. At this point addressing him as a brother he invited his attention to the placid look of the sea with the Moon looking graciously down on it. The First Voice enquired again as to how the ship was moving so fast without the help of wind or tide. To this the Second Voice replied that the air from before the ship was being removed and crowded at her back to press her forward ; (saying this) he urged his companion to fly higher and higher upwards to enable them to reach their heavenly abode in time, for (he knew) that the ship's speed would go on diminishing with the slow coming back to consciousness of the Mariner.

"Soon after this I got out of my trance and found the ship sailing quietly as in gentle weather. The night was extremely calm and the moon was shining high up in the heavens; and as I saw the dead companions of mine standing together on the deck of the vessel, I felt that they looked like the inmates of a charnel-house. They regarded me with their fixed, vacant eyes, which glittered in the light of the moon and yet retained the anguished reproachful looks which they had at the time of their death ; and (somehow) I found it difficult to take off my eyes from them and engage myself in prayer. But (soon enough) this evil influence over me was destroyed and I could again cast my eyes on the green-coloured ocean—and by looking at its waters over a great distance I could avoid seeing what otherwise was forcing itself on my gaze. (Indeed) I behaved like one who walking on a solitary road, knows that he is being closely

followed by a terrible fiend, and so walks *on* in great dread, and turning round at a point, continues to walk ahead not daring to look behind (to see if he is yet being pursued by the fiend). Soon, however, a heavenly breeze blew over me, which came without the least noise and produced no ripples, etc., on the waters of the sea. It gently blew over my hair and was softly wafted over my cheek like the vernal breeze which comes through the meadows; but though it felt like a positively cheering influence, it yet confusedly mingled with the fearful impressions of the terrible experiences I had gone through. The ship moved with a swift yet soft gliding motion and the breeze blew over me with a sweetness all its own and seemed to be passing over me alone.

"And now I beheld as in a joyous dream gradually come to my view the top of the light-house, the hill and the church of my own (beloved) native-place. We now drifted over to the harbour-bar and then I prayed most piteoustly to be assured that I was awake (and all that was happening to me was not a dream) or that I might remain dreaming always and not awake to the fact that it was all a dream. The harbour-bay was shining clearly and its waters seemed spread out like a sheet of smooth glass. The light of the moon was lying on it and the moon itself was being clearly reflected therein. The rock was shining brightly (in the moonlight)—so also the church that was situated on the rock; and the weathercock which was quite at rest now was also completely covered in the light of the moon. In the stillness of this moon-lit night, the bay was illumined with a white (mystic) light and from this issued forth several forms of spirits dressed in resplendent colours. I saw them in the waters at a little distance from the prow of the vessel—and turning round, a wonderful sight met my gaze. Over each one of the bodies of my dead companions, which now lay flat on the deck inert and lifeless, I found standing a bright luminous angel, waving his hands. It was indeed a glorious sight, which these bright angels made, and on the shore they seemed as so many signal-lights. They flourished their arms—but none of them breathed a syllable; and the perfect silence soothed my soul like a piece of music. Soon I heard the sound of the dashing of the oars of a boat as also the cheering welcome of the Pilot. My head was forcibly turned away (from the

band of angels) and I now saw a boat approaching me. I heard the Pilot and his boy making fast towards me and I was filled with a joy that could not be destroyed by the presence of the dead men around me. I heard the voice of a third person too and saw that he was the good Hermit who is ever occupied in singing the devotional songs which he himself makes in the forest and I felt comforted with the thought that he would hear my confession and cleanse my soul of the sin of the slaughter of the Albatross."

Part VII (ll. 514—625).

"The good Hermit lives in the forest which is situated on a shelving bank reaching down to the sea. He is generally busy lifting up his sweet voice in devotional songs and he finds great pleasure in talking to the sailors who come from distant countries. He prays regularly every day in the morning, at noon and evening ; using a soft cushion which consists of the decayed stump of an old oak tree entirely covered with moss.

The light boat (of the Pilot) came nearer, and I heard the Pilot express his wonder at the disappearance of all those beautiful signal-lights which he saw only a short while ago. The Hermit also expressed his surprise at their not getting a response to the (Pilot's) cheering welcome and further noticed that the planks of the ship were quite decayed and the sails so thin and shrivelled up that he had seen nothing like them in life or Nature excepting the dry, withered leaves of trees that lie strewn along the rivulet running through the forest at the time when the ivy-bush is all laden with snow and the owlet (perched on the ivy-bush) makes a whooping sound (as it were mocking) to the wolf down below known for eating the young ones of his dam. The pilot said in reply to this that indeed the ship had a weird, unearthly appearance and he was consequently afraid. The Hermit thereupon said encouragingly to the Pilot (and his boy) to push on the boat towards the ship.

"The boat came nearer, but I neither spoke a word nor moved a bit ; and when the boat came and stood close below the ship a deep rumbling sound was heard. This grew louder and more and more dreadful, and travelled onwards till it reached the ship. Then the waters divided and the ship went down like lead. I was now rendered senseless by the loud and dreadful sound which struck the sky and the sea, but my body at once floated up on the

waters as if it had been drowned for seven days: and more quickly than could be imagined, I found myself in the Pilot's boat, which moved round and round on the whirl of waters caused by the sinking ship; and perfect silence prevailed in the atmosphere, only the sound of the sinking of the vessel was being (for some time) re-echoed from the (neighbouring) hill.

"I moved my lips (to speak), but as soon as I did so, the Pilot shrieked in great fear and getting a fainting fit fell down in the boat; and even the pious Hermit was so shaken (at my strange appearance) that he raised his eyes to Heaven and started praying earnestly. I thereupon took charge of the oars of the boat, and the Pilot's boy, who went out of his mind, laughed senselessly and rolled about his eyes, and taking me to be the evil spirit, said that the devil could manage the oars quite well.

"Soon after this I found myself standing on firm land in my own country. The Hermit stepped out of the boat and for some time could hardly keep on his legs. I then implored the holy man to hear my confession and cleanse my soul; but (thinking me an evil spirit) he crossed his forehead and asked me to say quickly what sort of man I was. Thereupon my body was twisted violently with a racking pain, which compelled me to narrate the story (of my adventures), on completing which I found myself relieved of the agony I was enduring. Since then at certain times of which I have no previous knowledge, I am visited with this agonising pain, which keeps torturing me till I have related my fearful story to some one or the other. And under the pressure of this pain I travel from one land to another like night passing from one country to another and have come to be endowed with a strange power of utterance, and as soon as I can find out from a man's face if he must listen to my story and whenever I come across such a person, I at once unfold my tale to him.

"But what are those uproarious sounds bursting forth from the door? The Wedding Guests are there and they are making merry and the bride and bride-maids are singing in the garden-bower; but you oh! Wedding-Guest, better attend to the bell of the Evening Service that is calling me to prayer. And in conclusion I, who have experienced the uttermost solitude on the high seas (where for a time I missed the very presence of

God Himself) do wish to impress upon you that participation in marriage festivities gives me far less joy than walking in a good society to a church and there joining with loving friends and relations—young and old—in common prayer to the Father of us all. And in bidding good-bye to you I tell you most solemnly that one who shows the tenderest regard for all the creatures of God, is the man who shows the greatest devotion to God—and the best prayer consists in this kindly feeling for God's creatures both lofty and low, for the dear God has created all of us and loves us all equally well." Saying this the Mariner with the bright eyes and hoary beard disappeared, and the Wedding-Guest also now turned his back to the door of the bride-groom's house and walked in the manner of a person quite confused and bereft of his faculties ; but the next morning he got up much improved in wisdom and seriousness.

MODEL QUESTIONS

ON

COLERIDGE'S 'THE ANCIENT MARINER.'

(With references to Pp. containing Answers)

1. What are the chief literary features of the Romantic Age?—Show in what respects they are found reflected in the poetry of Coleridge.

[Intro : Pp. 1 & 13]

2. Give a brief sketch of the life of the Poet.

[Intro : Pp. 2—12]

3. Show that Coleridge's life was a 'tragic story of a high endowment with insufficient will.'

4. Consider carefully the most distinguishing characteristics and qualities of Coleridge's poetry.

[Intro: P. 12].

5. Write a note on the *genesis* of *The Ancient Mariner.*

[Intro : P. 17].

6. Relate briefly the story of *The Ancient Mariner.*

[*Vide* Analysis and Marginal Commentary].

7. Give a clear and succinct account of the course pursued by the ship.

[*Vide* Analysis and Marginal Commentary].

8. Discuss Coleridge's use of the supernatural in *The Ancient Mariner.*

[Intro : Pp. 14 & 24]

9. What is the moral and psychological significance of the poem ?

[Intro : Pp. 16 & 27]

10. Define a ballad. Distinguish between the *traditional* and *modern* ballad. To which class does *The Ancient Mariner* belong ?

[Intro : P. 28]

11. Quote or reproduce from *The Ancient Mariner* striking verses descriptive of some scene in nature.

[Intro : P. 15]

12. Write a brief note on the versification of the poem.

[Intro : P. 30.]

13. Give a brief description of the Phantom Ship and its inmates.

[Text, Analysis & Part III.]

14. Quote or reproduce—
(*a*) The poet's lines on Sleep.
(*b*) The description of the water-snakes.
(*c*) Lines describing the ship becalmed at sea.
(*d*) ,, ,, the roaring wind in part V.

15. Give a brief description of (*a*) the 'Hermit Good' (*b*) the Ancient Mariner.

16. Describe the effect of the appearance of the Mariner on the Pilot, the Pilot's boy and the Hermit.

[Text & Analysis, Part VII.]

17. Explain and Annotate the following:—the merry Minstrelsy (Notes, l. 36); Like noises in a swound (Notes, l. 62); an Albatross (Notes, l. 63); vespers nine (Notes l. 77); the furrow followed free (Notes, l. 104); the death-fires (Notes, l. 128); well-a-day (Notes, l. 139); restless gossameres (Notes, l. 184); the Night-mare, Life-in-Death (Notes, l. 193); ribbed sea-sand (Notes, l. 227); skinny hand (Notes, l. 229); silly buckets (Notes, l. 297); fire-flags sheen (Notes, l. 314); sweet jargoning (Notes, l. 362); charnel-dungeon (Notes, l. 435); far countree (Notes, l. 518); swift as dreams (Notes, l. 554).

18. *Paraphrase*:—

(i) And now the Storm-blast came.
....
Like noises in a swound.
[*Vide* Paraphrase, ll. 41—62.]

(ii) The western wave was all a-flame,
....
Is Death that Woman's mate ?
[*Vide* Paraphrase, ll. 171—189.]

(iii) The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
....
Like music on my heart.
[*Vide* Paraphrase, ll. 472—499]

(iv) O sweeter than the marriage feast,
....
He made and loveth all.
[*Vide* Paraphrase, ll. 601—617.]

19. Explain, with reference to the context the following, pointing out all peculiarities of thought and manner :—

(*a*) With sloping masts and dipping prow.
....
And southward aye we fled.
[Notes, ll. 45—50.]

(*b*) As idle as a painted ship,
Upon a painted ocean.
[Notes, ll. 117—118.]

(*c*) The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.
[Notes, ll. 129—130.]

(*d*) As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged, and tacked, and veered.
[Notes, ll. 155—156.]

(*e*) As if through a dungeon-grate he peered,
With broad and burning face.
Notes, ll. 179—180.]

(*f*) The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark.
[Notes, ll. 199—200.]

(*g*) Fear at my heart, as at a cup
My life-blood seemed to sip!
[Notes, ll. 204—205.]

(*h*) Till clomb above the eastern bar,
....
Within the nether tip.
[Notes, ll. 209—211.]

(*i*) O happy living things! no tongue
....
And I blessed them unaware.
[Notes, ll. 282—87.]

(*j*) Like waters shot from some high crag,
....
A river steep and wide.
[Notes, ll. 324—6.]

(*k*) It ceased; yet still the sails made on
....
Singeth a quiet tune.
[Notes, ll. 367—72.]

(*l*) Still as a slave before his lord,
....
Up to the Moon is cast.
[Notes, ll. 414—17.]

(*m*) The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.
[Notes, ll. 424—25.]

(*n*) Like one, that on a lonesome road
....
Doth close behind him tread.
[Notes, ll. 446—451.]

(*o*) O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.
[Notes, ll. 470—471.]

(*p*) No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.
[Notes, ll. 498—99.]

(*q*) Unless perchance it were
Brown skeletons of leaves, that lag
....
That eats the she-wolf's young.
[Notes, ll. 532—37.]

(*r*) He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
[Notes, ll. 612—13.]

INTRODUCTION.

I. History of 'Christabel'.

Christabel was first published by John Murray in 1816; but, for several years previously, the existence of the marvellous poem was known to a large and growing circle of the poet's friends and acquaintances. Coleridge himself tells us, in his *Biographia Literaria*, that the poem was very popular while yet unpublished: "During the many years which intervened between the composition and publication of the *Christabel*, it became almost as well known among literary men as if it had been on common sale; the same references were made to it, and the same liberties taken with it, even to the very names of the imaginary persons in the poem. From almost all of our most celebrated poets, and from some with whom I had no personal acquaintance, I either received or heard of expressions of admiration that, (I can truly say,) appeared to myself utterly disproportionate to a work, that pretended to be nothing more than a common Faery Tale......Year after year, and in societies of the most different kinds, I have been entreated to recite it: and the result was still the same in all, and altogether different in this respect from the effect produced by the occasional recitation of any other poems I had composed." When, however, the poem was published, along with *Kubla Khan* and *The Pains of Sleep*, it "heard nothing but abuse"; and one prominent critic was bold enough to describe *Christabel* as "utterly destitute of value, exhibiting from beginning to end not one ray of genius." Subsequent critics—two or three generations of them—have made ample amends to Coleridge, and to-day *Christabel* is justly regarded as one of the supremely melodious and moving poems in the English language.

From Coleridge's preface to the published version, we learn that the first part of *Christabel* was written in the year 1797, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset, while the second part was written in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. It was in 1797 that Coleridge became intimate with Wordsworth and his "exquisite sister", Dorothy; Coleridge had his home at Nether Stowey, while the Wordsworths established themselves at

Alfoxden, hardly three miles distant. In the ensuing weeks and months, brother and sister and friend met frequently, talked frequently, and almost "became one soul." Wordsworth and Coleridge projected the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads.* It was agreed between them that Coleridge's endeavours "should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." The immediate result was Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and the first part of *Christabel.*

Although Coleridge asserts that the first part of *Christabel* was composed in 1797, some passages in it at any rate seem to owe their origin to incidents that belong to the next year. Mr. Dykes Campbell has found parallel passages in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal corresponding to the following:

> The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
> It covers but not hides the sky.
> The moon is behind, and at the full;
> And yet she looks both small and dull......
>
> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,
> Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
> On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

The parallel entries in the Journal are dated respectively 31st January, 1798 and 7th March, 1798. Thus it is likely, though by no means certain, that the first part of *Christabel*, although begun in the previous year, was not completed till about the middle of 1798.

In September, 1798, Coleridge left England for Germany, accompanied by Wordsworth and Dorothy. The Wordsworths returned to England earlier, but Coleridge spent about a year in Germany, mastering alike the German language and German metaphysics. Returning to England at last, Coleridge spent some gorgeous weeks exploring the Lake country in the exhilarating company of the Wordsworths. Coleridge then proceeded to London and worked as a journalist for about six months on the staff of the *Morning Post.* But this work was uncongenial

to Coleridge and he was eager to return to the country and read "old folios", even if it should mean a very considerable diminution in his income. Meanwhile, the Wordsworths had set up house at Grasmere; and Coleridge and family also fixed up their abode at Greta Hall, near Keswick, in July 1800. The air of the countryside, the consciousness of having escaped from London and politics, the proximity of the Wordsworths, the attractions of the Lake country, all inspired Coleridge to brave the perils of poetic composition. The second part of *Christabel* was written; the remaining parts were planned,——but now a shadow crossed his path, he was subject to fits of depression, and he found it impossible to complete the poem.

"It is probable," says Coleridge in the preface to the published version of 1816, "that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods (viz. 1797 and 1800), or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect." During the sixteen or more years the poem remained in manuscript, it had inspired men like Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron to imitate (in so far as such witchery can at all be imitated) the metre of *Christabel* in some of their own narrative poems. Thus, Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared in 1805 and Byron's early narrative romances came out in 1812 and the following years. There was the possibility, therefore, of people who read *Christabel* in 1816 for the first time, rushing to the conclusion that Coleridge had plagiarized either Scott or Byron. "I am confident, however," adds Coleridge in the preface above referred to, "that......the celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge, and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two Monkish Latin hexameters :

> 'Tis mine and it is likewise yours;
> But an if this will not do,
> Let it be mine, good friend! for I
> Am the poorer of the two."

Scott and Byron had the greatest regard for Coleridge's poetic genius and, in fact, it was on Byron's suggestion that John

Murray agreed to publish *Christabel* in 1816.

Another fervent admirer of *Christabel* was Keats, whose *Lamia*, *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* very clearly reveal the influence of Coleridge's poem. And yet it cannot be said that the *Christabel* metre has had a meritorious history. Scott reproduced its form but not its witchery, Byron debased its currency in every way; and, in Quiller-Couch's words, "it has since been utterly vulgarized, and the very lilt of it nowadays suggests *The Mistletoe Bough*, melodrama, and the balladry of *Bow Bells*." *Christabel*——to beg the question——was and is a miracle, and all attempts to imitate it successfully are apparently foredoomed to failure.

II. The Story of the Poem.

During the first year of their close association, Wordsworth and Coleridge planned the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*; and this epoch-making book did in fact come out in the spring of 1798. It was agreed between the two friends that Wordsworth was to choose his themes from ordinary life while Coleridge was to attempt poems in which "the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the interest aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real." In other words, Coleridge was to strive, by the power of the rhythmic word, to make impossibilities probable. *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* were both composed by Coleridge with this aim in view.

Christabel is thus professedly a supernatural story; elsewhere—in his *Biographia Literaria*,—Coleridge called it "nothing more than a common Fairy Tale". But it is really more than—much more than—a "common Faery Tale". The magic, the enchantment, the suggestion of causeless and immitigable evil, these are there sure enough; but the human touches too are many and varied, and we cannot tear away our eyes from the human story of Christabel. Let us, however, first summarize the story :—

There is a lone castle—somewhere, anywhere !—and its owner is Sir Leoline, a widower, who dotes upon his only child, Christabel. She dreams one night about her lover who is far

away; she is distressed, and she therefore prays at the midnight hour next day beneath an old oak tree in the forest for the welfare of her lover. Hearing a sudden moaning sound, Christabel goes to the other side of the oak tree and is astonished to see there a beautiful young lady, lying in some disorder and moaning pitifully. Being questioned by Christabel, the lady explained that she was kidnapped by men in the morning and brought to that place; those men left her there some time ago, promising to make speedy return; she had remained unconscious beneath the oak tree, till the castle clock woke her up. Christabel is moved by the story and leads her to her father's castle.

When Geraldine—that is the lady's name—and Christabel cross the court of the castle, the mastiff bitch makes unexpectedly an angry moan ; when they pass the hall, the dying brands in the fire-place burst suddenly into flame ; however softly they walk, the hall echoes nonetheless. They reach at last Christabel's room.

Geraldine now almost falls down in a swoon. She recovers when she drinks the cordial wine that Christabel gives her—but presently the lady talks distractedly, as if Christabel's mother herself is present in the room. Christabel attributes this strange behaviour to her exhaustion and gives her some more wine.

Christabel now undresses and slips into her bed; but, being unable to sleep, she watches Geraldine. The latter also undresses and, after some inexplicable hesitation, lies down by Christabel's side. Geraldine's face suddenly changes, she exposes the stain or her bosom, she tells Christabel that she will henceforth lose her free power of expression ! For an hour Christabel is in Geraldine's absolute power; she—the same Christabel who only a little while ago wore such an angelic and beautiful look—sleeps with wide open eyes, she dreams of unutterable things. The hour of Geraldine's triumph comes to an end; Christabel's guardian spirit—the spirit of her dead mother—appears to her and soothes her : she close her eyes, she sleeps peacefully, restfully, with an innocent smile on her face.

Next morning, Geraldine first wakes up and awakens Christabel also. Geraldine looks as innocent as she looked

beneath the old oak tree and even more beautiful than she had looked then. Christabel therefore thinks that she had only dreamed bad things about her—that such things had not really happened! Then both proceed to the Baron's room, and he is told Geraldine's story. When the Baron, Sir Leoline, learns that Geraldine's father is Lord Roland, he is astonished and pleased. In their youth, Lord Roland and Sir Leoline had been friends; but mischief-makers had created misunderstandings between them, and so they had parted enemies many years ago. Sir Leoline gazes at Geraldine, and her face reminds him of the youthful face of Lord Roland.

Christabel, however, when she sees her father embracing Geraldine, startlingly remembers her last night's experience and it causes her a twinge of pain. Meanwhile, Sir Leoline orders his bard to proceed at once to Lord Roland's castle and invite him to come to Sir Leoline's place; the Baron will meet his former friend half-way and beg forgiveness for the cruel words he had spoken before—and so they would be friends again! But the bard wants to undertake the journey only the next day. For, he says, he had dreamed last night an extraordinary dream. The Baron's dove, named Christabel, was lying on the ground and screaming in agony; the bard went to see it, and he was amazed to see a snake coiling round the dove! Hence the bard would like to spend the day singing purifying songs in the forest and the next day he would gladly go to Lord Roland's castle.

Sir Leoline thinks that the 'dove' in the dream can refer to Geraldine, and kisses her in a mood of thankfulness. But Geraldine turns a little from the Baron and fixes on Christabel a snake-stare of fear and malice. Christabel is shaken once again, she shudders and hisses and unescapably she feels bewitched by the snake-stare; and presently her own eyes grow small and dull and vicious. This mood too passes; Christabel feels the timely influence of her guardian spirit; and, plucking up courage, she kneels before her father and earnestly entreats him to send away Geraldine at once. Sir Leoline is dazed by this request; he loves his daughter, but he cannot send away his friend's daughter merely to satisfy a girl's idle whim! In reply to his daughter's request, Sir Leoline repeats his order to the bard and, leaving Christabel to herself, leads out the lady Geraldine.

III. The Contemplated Sequel.

This is the story—in bare outline—of the first two parts of *Christabel*. Coleridge contemplated two more cantos which were to complete the story according to the following sketch :

"Over the mountains the Bard, as directed by Sir Leoline, hastes with his disciple ; but, in consequence of one of those inundations supposed to be common to the country, the spot only where the castle stood is discovered, the edifice itself being washed away. He determines to return. Geraldine, being acquainted with all that is passing, like the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, vanishes. Reappearing, however, she awaits the return of the Bard, exciting in the meantime by her wily arts all the anger she could rouse in the Baron's breast, as well as that jealousy of which he is described to have been susceptible. The old bard and the youth at length arrive, and therefore she can no longer personate the character of Geraldine, the daughter of Lord Roland de Vaux, but changes her appearance to that of the accepted though absent lover of Christabel. Next ensues a courtship most distressing to Christabel, who feels—she knows not why—great disgust for her once favoured knight. The coldness is very painful to the Baron, who has no more conception than herself of the supernatural transformation. She at last yields to her father's entreaties, and consents to approach the altar with the hated suitor. The real lover returning, enters at this moment, and produces the ring which she had once given him in sign of her betrothment. Thus defeated, the supernatural being Geraldine disappears. As predicted, the castle-bell tolls, the mother's voice is heard, and, to the exceeding great joy of the parties, the rightful marriage takes place, after which follows a reconciliation and explanation between father and daughter."

This sketch of the contemplated conclusion we owe to Coleridge's friend and biographer, Gillman, who no doubt had means of knowing what the poet's actual intentions in the matter were. But it is difficult to believe that Coleridge could have completed the poem in the manner indicated above. For one thing, such a sequel to the first and second parts of *Christabel* would have made it more a mere fairy tale and less the thing of wonder and wild surmise that, even in its unfinished condition, it actually is. Quiller-Couch pertinently asks: "Yet who,

studying *Christabel*, can, after the first two or three pages have been turned, believe that the poem could ever and by any possibility have been finished ?"

Further, there is only one question that an average reader persists in asking after reading the first and second part of *Christabel*—viz., "Is Christabel lost for ever ?" It is a crucial question; and our moral sense no less than our human curiosity demands an answer to this question. The sequel Coleridge originally planned doubtless does give us a pointed answer: oh, yes, it was a tough business, Geraldine had no end of monkey tricks up her sleeve, but—in the end—it came out all right: Geraldine was exposed and had to quit the field, Christabel married her betrothed knight, and "all's well that ends well !" Even Coleridge's verbal magic would have found it impossible to fit this sequel into the scheme of the first two parts of *Christabel* !

Nor is it at all necessary to turn to this "sequel" to find an answer to our persistent question: "Is Christabel lost for ever ?" Christabel herself entertains no doubts in the matter:

> But this she knows, in joys and woes,
> That saints will aid if men will call:
> For the blue sky bends over all !

Though infinitely less pompous than the First Brother in *Comus*, Christabel's faith is no less strong; she does not say much, but we know that it is in her sweet and angelic nature to feel that

> Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt;
> Surprised by unjust force, but not inthrall'd.

After every crisis, Christabel seeks and receives support from her guardian spirit, the spirit of her dead mother; nay, all nature—the toothless mastiff bitch, the dying brands, the mysterious power that warned Bracy the bard in the guise of a dream,—seems to be in sympathy with Christabel. Even after Geraldine's daylight enchantment, Christabel can pray—she prays "inly", but nonetheless fervently ! And if she can pray thus, can she doubt that the saints will redeem her at last ?

Christabel thus firmly believes that Geraldine's supremacy is but a temporary misfortune and that her guardian spirit will truly save her in the end. As for the average reader, he answers the question—Is Christabel lost for ever ?—according to his own

predilections. Professor S. G. Dunn remarks that "we are content to know, by many hints given to us, that Christabel will find safety and happiness at last." On the other hand, Mr. Hamilton Thompson interprets the poem differently: "As it is, Christabel is left under the dominion of the power of evil, without a hint of her ultimate delivery and still less, of the reclamation of Geraldine, which, according to Coleridge, was to point the real purpose of the story." As a matter of fact, whatever were Coleridge's own views, no reader is really interested in the reclamation of Geraldine; but many readers would very much like Christabel to come out of these terrible experiences unscathed. The forlornness of Christabel at the end of Part II is certainly most depressing; and yet does not one somehow feel that Geraldine's discomfiture will not be long delayed ? In any case, the unfinished poem is more artistically satisfying than the contemplated sequel to it.

IV. Meaning of the Poem

Coleridge once remarked that *The Ancient Mariner*, far from wanting a moral, had in fact "too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Night's tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and lo ! a genie starts up, and says 'he must kill the aforesaid merchant, because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son.' " And Mrs. Alice Meynell thinks that the "moral" of *The Ancient Mariner* is deliberately perverse; for in it Coleridge "intends to enforce a 'lesson' by telling us that two hundred mariners died of thirst because they had, with a superstition pardonable in their state ot education, supposed an albatross to be the bringer of foggy weather, and had approved its slaughter, as almost all men implicitly approve the daily slaughter of innocent beast and bird." The "moral" of *The Ancient Mariner* :—

> He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.
>
> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all———

paralleled as it is by the "*moral*" of Wordsworth's *Hart-Leap Well*——

One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals;
Never to bend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels——

is, at any rate, heavily underlined at the end of the poem. Whether one cares for or approves of the "moral" or not, one is disarmed by the sheer witchery of the poem that keeps the reader in thrall from the first line to the last.

With *Christabel* it is otherwise. Satisfactory or no, some reason is assigned for the prolonged agony of the Ancient Mariner; but no such reason is given for the sufferings of Christabel. It is, however, likely that, as Prof. Gingerich points out, Coleridge would not have introduced the killing of the albatross as a motive for punishing the mariner, had not Wordsworth thrown out this idea. In life, after all, very many people suffer, they know not why; so it is with Christabel; and so Coleridge might have contentedly left the story of the mariner as well! Had not Coleridge's own footsteps "been dogged by an untoward fate?" Men and women——even innocent men and women——are not free in this vale of tears from the attentions of Shapes, Forms, Destinies, and other mysterious Powers and Personalities of Evil. The *deva* and the *asura* are for ever in conflict, and our own small world is for ever one of the theatres of this apparently unending conflict.

Christabel does not shout a "moral" at its readers—and this is as it should be in a "work of such pure imagination." And readers can distil out whatever "moral" or "meaning" they please from the poem. According to Mr. Traill, its main idea is "that the purity of a pure maiden is a charm more powerful for the protection of those dear to her than the spells of the evil one for their destruction." Professor Dunn, again, thinks that "the theme of the poem is similar to that of *Comus*......Virtue has power against all evil and in virtue alone can human confidence rest. Sir Leoline is deceived by the outward beauty of the Lady Geraldine, but the innocence of Christabel and the guardian influence of her saintly mother protect her from

the wiles of evil."

There are other critics who would rather read *Christabel* merely as an enchanting tale. "Its moral," says Mr. Hamilton Thompson, "if it had any apart from the natural contrast suggested by contact of the pure Christabel with the evil Geraldine, was as much an after-thought as the philosophical meaning of *The Ancient Mariner.*" And Messrs. Treble and Vallins say succinctly and somewhat dogmatically: "The interpretation of the story does not matter; its very obscurity adds to the wonder of the poem."

It is no doubt true that *Christabel*, being a poem of pure imagination, is an impression, not an argument, a suggestion of a cosmic conflict between Good and Evil, not a rational explanation of it. The last three lines of "The Conclusion to Part I"—

> But this she knows, in joys and woes,
> That saints will aid if men will call :
> For the blue sky bends over all !—

describe Christabel's faith, not Coleridge's. The most that Coleridge could bring himself to say would be: "I wish I had myself Christabel's faith !" It is very likely that most readers of *Christabel* do in fact cherish this sublime faith in the ultimate triumph of Good over Evil. But this consoling belief in ultimate victory by no means quite mitigates Christabel's sufferings. The question is not whether Good will or will not ultimately triumph over Evil, but rather this other more urgent question: "Why does Evil exist at all ?"

Evil—what we commonly call Evil—seems to dog the faltering footsteps of men in diverse garbs, shapes, potencies, and personalities. Evil is, as it were, waiting round the corner ; and one often sees it and doesn't recognize it—whether it assumes an Iago's or a Geraldine's shape – until it is too late ! Why should Desdemona suffer as she does in Shakespeare's tragedy ? Why should Christabel come under the clutches of Geraldine ? Why should such an engine of pure evil—an Iago, a Geraldine—exist to poison the lives of innocent people ? Coleridge doesn't attempt an answer to the question; he merely takes this fact for granted and realizes this in poetic terms. Evil exists; it is terrible and fascinating at once; and it is always round the corner. And Christabel herself is not quite proof

against the machinations of the Prince of Evil. The pity of it, Christabel, O! the pity of it !

It is easy to find fault with Christabel and Sir Leoline because their fatal love for Geraldine is based, not upon real understanding, but upon the fascination exercised by her extraordinary beauty and the natural pity aroused by the tale of her supposed sufferings. But which tender-hearted lady or chivalrous Baron would have acted otherwise ? The existence of Evil is, to our limited understanding, a potent fact; its operations are as mysterious as they are apparently unescapable. On the other hand, the Divine is equally a fact; and though Evil often seems to daunt and even to check-mate the Divine, our limited vision cannot always—can but rarely—see the ultimate issue of the conflict. All that Coleridge attempts in *Christabel* is to vivify—in words that often seem to be more than words—this cosmic conflict between good and Evil, the Divine and the Asura. Beauty, cunning, magic, unbelievable powers, these Geraldine summons to her aid; and Christabel has her own visible and invisible helpers – the bitch, the fire, the dream, the echoing hall, and, above all, her guardian spirit. The struggle between Christabel and Geraldine—between Good and Evil—pursues its own career; we watch its singular vicissitudes, and always, after every crisis, we see Christabel recovering from the clutches of the snake, never despairing, always hoping ! Christabel is human, she is the good in us all; Geraldine too is human, she is the Old Adam and the Old Eve in us all; and Christabel and Geraldine are alas ! locked up in a fatal embrace; they meet and part and meet once again ! But like Christabel we too cannot give up the hope that one day we shall be able to shake off the snake once and for all !

V. Significance.

We have called *Christabel* a story of enchantment. A creature of evil, Geraldine is cruelly fascinating and cruelly serpentine in her smiles and her wiles and her ruthlessness. As a story, *Christabel* is no more than a nightmare; but the story comes to us in the accents of poetry—"seraphic" poetry, if you will—and hence the poem is richly significant. It is the magic of the verse, the verbal wizardry displayed throughout, that makes the reader take the lady Geraldine and the mastiff's angry howl and the leaping tongue of flame and the dull snake-

stare of bewitched Christabel and even the wriggles of the dove in the snake's coils,—take all these mysterious phenomena very seriously indeed. The story is told with a seeming ease and patent artlessness—but the ease and the artlessness are alike deceptive; they cover, but do not hide, the poet's marvellous art.

Since *Christabel* is, on the face of it, a story of enchantment, Coleridge draws upon his great gifts to evoke at the very outset a proper atmosphere. The ingredients of romance and mystery are cunningly gathered together : a chilly night with an obscured moon ; a castle clock chiming the hour of midnight ; a toothless mastiff bitch emitting sixteen short howls ; the owl and the crow ; a maiden hurrying at dead of night to an old oak tree, bare except for a mistletoe ; innocence and love joined in midnight prayer ! These details fuse into an appropriate background for the events to follow.

As at the beginning, at every stage of the "action" of the poem, Coleridge evokes the appropriate atmosphere with an uncanny accuracy and an amazing economy of words. The question-and-answer method is again and again exploited with striking success :

> Is the night chilly and dark?
> The night is chilly, but not dark......
>
> Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
> There is not wind enough in the air
> To move away the ringlet curl
> From the lovely lady's cheek......

The "tense" shifts from the past to the present and back again to the past, and always—or almost always—with a convincing naturalness :

> She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
> And stole to the other said of the oak.
> What sees she there?......
>
> Then suddenly, as one defied,
> Collects herself in scorn and pride,
> And lay down by the Maiden's side......
>
> She rolled her large bright eyes divine
> Wildly on Sir Leoline.
> The maid, alas ! her thoughts are gone
> She nothing sees......

When a situation is dramatically vivid, Coleridge resorts to the present tense : when he has merely to describe a series of events or to portray less vivid or excruciating states of mind, he is content to stick to the past tense. And, although the changes in tense are frequent, nowhere do they disagreeably obtrude themselves on the reader's attention. If anything, these only add to the timeless quality of the "actions" narrated in the poem.

The real enchantment, too, when we come to it at last, awes and all but petrifies the reader by its disturbing intensity and apparent finality. Here we have no foul-smelling sorceress evoking what Dr. Herford calls "prodigies of the external world" : we have only a beautiful young lady embracing another beautiful young lady—and yet the effect of the charm is potent and terrible. The revelation of Geraldine's serpent-nature comes as a blinding flash and silences, not only the helpless Christabel, but the sensitive reader as well.

In Part II, Coleridge dares and overcomes an even more difficult task—enchantment by daylight. Here, too, he prepares the way with consummate art. There is magic in the very air of Langdale—the devil gives out his merry peal from Borodale—there are ghosts in Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair and Dungeon-ghyll—and there sits Sir Leoline, so wan and wild, assuring us that life is really a living death. Fair is foul and foul is fair ! We are prepared thus for the events that follow. Sir Leoline thinks that foul is fair and that fair is foul: Geraldine finds favour in his eyes, while Christabel only enrages and pains him !

As with the enchantment in Christabel's room, this second and more daring feat of enchantment also is achieved without any "prodigies of the external world". Geraldine's snake-like personality—the personality that lies coiled deep and snug under the cover of her fascinating exterior—gathers itself into her eyes for a fraction of a second : her eyes transform themselves in a second, for a fraction of a second, into pools of evil, and transmit their malevolence to Christabel ; the eyes clear instantaneously, and Geraldine is once more Lord Roland's beautiful daughter. In only nine simple lines the whole enchantment takes shape and galvanizes itself into a spectacle of causeless human suffering, from which we cannot tear away our eyes :

> A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy ;
> And the lady' eyes they shrunk in her head,

Each shrunk to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance !—
One moment—and the sight was fled !
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound......

The first enchantment had been an easy affair; Christabel was in her own room, and there was neither father nor dependant to rush to her rescue; it was soon after midnight, and Christabel was a guileless, unsuspecting maiden. The second enchantment is a more daring business; Christabel is armed with her last night's experience, though she is also tongue-tied in consequence; her father, Bracy the Bard, and perhaps, other attendants as well, are there to protect her if need be; and, above all, it is daytime, and the place is her father's audience hall. But Geraldine scores again !

The "atmosphere" of *Christabel* is thus no simple phenomenon; it thickens and relaxes by turns, it embraces chill and fire, moonlight and daylight, a mastiff's howl and an owlet's scritch; but it is always a real thing that creeps into us and abides there. Besides evoking atmosphere, Coleridge makes use of parallelism and symbolism also as items in the supernatural machinery of the poem. Bracy's dream of the dove in the coils of the green serpent is as real as the sight of Christabel in the prison-arms of the lady Geraldine. And when Coleridge writes—

The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky—

does he intend to prepare us for the obscuring of Christabel's angelic soul by the shadow forcibly cast by the snake-like Geraldine ? When we see Christabel passively imitating "that look of dull and treacherous hate," do we not feel—feel even then—that though "the thin grey cloud is spread on high," it only covers but does not "hide the sky"?

VI. Form and Metre.

Like *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* also is written in the form of a ballad; but, while *The Ancient Mariner* is written in stanzas, *Christabel* abandons the stanzas and is written in rhymed couplets, with four stresses in each line. Some old

ballads doubtless helped Coleridge to fashion out this new instrument of verse; but it is a far cry from the *naivete* of lines like:

> There were three ravens sat on a tree,
> They were as black as they might be.
> The one of them said to his mate,
> "Where shall we our breakfast take ?"

to the rich, romantic music of :

> Behold! her bosom and half her side—
> A sight to dream of, not to tell !

or of :

> Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
> For she belike hath drunken deep
> Of all the blessedness of sleep.

Christabel is thus a ballad in form and embodies, in Walter Pater's words, "some of its terminology and some also of its quaint conceits." The bareness of the phrasing; the archaisms, the alliterations, and the onomatopoeic expressions; the shifts in tense and the general rapidity in narration; the supernatural background; the lucid outlines of the principal characters : these typical chraracteristics of ballad-poetry are fused into a jet of pure romantic music in the two parts of *Christabel*

While the old ballad-poetry is one of the principal inspirations of *Christabel*, it is not the only one; for, Coleridge himself has confessed that the following lines from Crashaw "were ever present to my mind whilst writing the second part of *Christabel*; if, indeed, by some subtle process of the mind they did not suggest the first thought of the whole poem :

> Since 'tis not to be had at home,
> She'l travel to martyrdome.
> No home for her confesses she,
> But where she may a martyr be.
> She'l to the Moores, and trade with them
> For this invalued diadem ;
> She offers them her dearest breath,
> With Christ's name in't, in change for death.
> She'l bargain with them, and will give
> Them God, and teach them how to live

In Him, or if they this deny,
For Him she'l teach them how to die.
So shall she leave amongst them sown
The Lord's blood, or, at least, her own.
Farewell, then, all the world—adieu,
Teresa is no more for you :
Farewell all pleasures, sports and joys,
Never till now esteemed toys—
Farewell whatever dear'st may be,
Mother's arms or father's knee ;
Farewell house, and farewell home,
She's for the Moores and martyrdome."

It is clear from this extract and from Coleridge's high opinion of it and confession of indebtedness to it, that he "shaped his fairy vessel out of worn and weather-beaten timber"; *naivete*, mystery, action, thought, realism, romance, a searching sense of actuality, an utter familiarity with the "ladder of the impossible", all are old shop-soiled things in the realm of poetry—and yet Coleridge's *Christabel*, even granting that it used only these shop soiled things, remains a wonderful poem, for ever fresh and for ever new !

There are, of course, readers who, like Quiller-Couch, feel that *Christabel* "rings false, painfully false, here and there" ; compared to *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* appears to be incomplete, prolix in parts, and somewhat uneven ; one modern critic even thinks that the years seem to make *Christabel* only "shabbier and flabbier". But there is no sensitive student of English literature but finds at least parts of *Christabel* "seraphic" in their utterance. And—quite apart from occasional couplets which ring false owing to their association with the jingle of lesser writers—the "verse" of *Christabel* has fascinated by its sheer magic several generations of readers.

In the preface to the first published edition of *Christabel*, Coleridge briefly explained the principles underlying the metre of the poem : "......The metre of *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular ; though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle : namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found

to be only four. Nevertheless, this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion". Although most of the lines in *Christabel* have between seven to twelve syllables, cut up into four feet, and with four stresses in each line, very occasionally even extremer variations are noticed. Thus we have a line of four syllables in :

Tū-whīt ! — Tū-whoō !

And the following line contains no less than fourteen syllables:

And didst bring her hōme with thēē in lōve and in chārity.

It is also possible to locate a line here, another there, in which the stresses number three or five :

Is fāstened to an āngel's feēt ;
And foūnd'st a bright lādy, surpāssingly fāir.

But the variations are, as Coleridge claims, always "in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion". For instance, he often resorts to an anapaestic measure whenever he wishes to portray passion, or suggest danger, or otherwise indicate a rising tempo in the action.

Geraldine's spell in Part I is "the most ambitious part of Coleridge's metrical scheme". Of the twelve lines that constitute the spell, five are short lines with only two stresses in each of them while one line has fourteen syllables ; and the couplet-scheme breaks down utterly towards the close and is replaced by rhymes that play hide and seek to our discomfiture. And in the last line—

To shield her and shelter her from the damp air—

"the gradual cessation of the murmuring voice is marked by the change of accentuation and the lingering slowness of the final foot, in which the last word but one, 'damp', cannot be slurred over but partly anticipates the accent on 'air' ". These and the other "tricks of the trade" nevertheless combine to produce "a veritable *tour de force*—the very model of a metre for romantic legend."

VII. "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel"

It is only natural that those who have read both these great poems should wish to make a comparative study of their

excellences and striking characteristics. *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* are both jewels of a singular and haunting beauty. Although one is a finished poem and the other is not, both are alike perfect emanations from a supra-physical world; again, although one states its moral categorically and the other only indirectly suggests it, the poems are equally endowed with a spiritual urgency to which the reader immediately responds.

Both *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* are poetic attempts to project evil before us——evil grappling with man with a view to debasing him and destroying him. "But"—complains Professor Oliver Elton——"no reason is given for the doings of Geraldine, that will serve even in the land of dreams. It is otherwise in *The Ancient Mariner*, where all, in its own enchanted world, is distinct and intelligible." What Professor Elton means is that a reason is assigned for the sufferings of the mariner while no such reason is assigned in regard to Christabel's sufferings. The mariner is betrayed by evil—the sudden upsurge of evil in his own heart; Christabel also is betrayed by evil—the evil that surprises her in the guise of a fair maiden seeking shelter in her house. Evil—whether it is within the heart of man or comes upon him unawares from extraneous sources—is the "villain of the piece" in *The Ancient Mariner*, as it is also in *Christabel*. As we pointed out in an earlier section, both Christabel and Geraldine are within us, they are but projections of our own higher and lower natures; likewise, even the Mariner is at last able to pluck out the evil from within and throw it out! Superficial differences notwithstanding, both the poems are thus vitally and profoundly human, and touch the deepest issues concerning human life with spiritual insight and daring imagination.

In *The Ancient Mariner*, the supernatural machinery consists of weird creatures like Death, Life-in-Death, Voices, the Polar Spirit, the angelic spirits, and what not; in *Christabel*, on the other hand, these conventional items are absent and the enchantment is insinuated by purely natural means. And yet, to quote Professor Dunn, "the effect is all the more enthralling because it is in the mind, psychical. Little things that might pass almost unnoticed thrill us with the sense of danger; the low moan, the gems entangled in the hair,

the faint sweet voice......the sudden silent opening of the door; the sinking down upon the threshold ; the 'fit of flame'......all these happenings might be but coincidences, and yet we are made to feel that they are not." The supernatural is thus treated by Coleridge "in the spirit of psychology rather than of melodrama."

Again, Coleridge—"the heaven-eyed creature"—scatters in both poems sound and colour effects. "The poet of the spiritual sense," as Mrs. Meynell calls him, Coleridge communicates through stray phrases a heightened awareness of the senses of sight, of touch, and of hearing. The awareness, however, varies with the environment—the sea in *The Ancient Mariner* and the countryside in *Christabel*. Accordingly, as Dr. Bradley has shown, "the colouring in *The Ancient Mariner* is brilliant and vivid, often fantastic, here and there even bizarre"; but "in *Christabel* there is very little colour, and the light is almost everywhere subdued......In the whole poem there is hardly a touch a colour beyond the green of the snake in Bracy's dream, the blue of Christabel's eyes and the veins of the Witch's feet, the green of the moss and mistletoe on the oak, and the red of its last leaf." And Dr. Bradley concludes by saying that *Christabel*, or at least the First Part, " is the more totally and utterly Coleridgian of the two poems."

CHRISTABEL

PREFACE.

The first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797 at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part after my return from Germany, in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. It is probable, that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. The dates are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's task. I am confident, however, that as far as the present poem is concerned, the celebrated poets whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge, and who on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters,

'Tis mine and it is likewise yours!
But an if this will not do,
Let it be mine good friend! for I
Am the poorer of the two.

I have only to add, that the metre of the Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.

PART I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin grey cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is grey:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;

And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low
And naught was green upon the oak,
But moss and rarest misletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is, she cannot tell,—
On the other side it seems to be
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!
"Mary mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel,) "And who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness,
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How camest thou here?"
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind,
They spurred amain, their steeds were white,

And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced, I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand" (thus ended she),
"And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand
And comforted fair Geraldine:
"O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;

Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the Lady by her side:
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,

Yet she an angry moan did make !
And what can ail the mastiff bitch ?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch :
For what can ail the mastiff bitch ?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will !
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying ;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame ;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"O softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And, jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death with stifled breath !
And now have reached her chamber door ;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see

The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.
The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered—"Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the grey-haired friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"
But soon with altered voice, said she—
"Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?

Why stares she with unsettled eye ?
Can she the bodiless dead espy ?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
"Off, woman, off ! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off ! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
"Alas !" said she, "this ghastly ride—
Dear lady ! it hath wildered you !"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, "'Tis over now!"

Again the wild-flower wine she drank :
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright ;
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countree.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
"All they, who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel !
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, "So let it be,"
And as the lady bade, did she.

Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close ;
So half-way from the bed she rose
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around ;
Then drawing in her breath aloud
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast ;
Her silken robe, and inner vest
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold ! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell !
O shield her ! shield sweet Christabel !

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs ;
Ah ! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay ;
Then suddenly as one defied
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took

Ah well-a-day !
And with low voice and doleful look

These words did say:
"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

THE CONCLUSION TO PART I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
Amid the jagged shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh! called it fair, not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah, woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,

Fearfully dreaming, yet I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame ! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree ?
And lo ! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine ! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine ! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will ! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo ! tu—whoo !
Tu—whoo ! tu—whoo! from wood and fell !
And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance ;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft ; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes ; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright !
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light !
Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,

Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free,
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere?
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

PART II

"EACH matin bell," the Baron saith,
"Knells us back to a world of death."
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say,
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law
That still at dawn the sacristan,
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, "So let it knell!"
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As will fill up the space between,
In Langdale Pike and Witch's Lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,

With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borodale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well."

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
"Sure I have sinned!" said Christabel,

" Now heaven be praised if all be well !"
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, Who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and the lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame !

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Loeline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine ?

Alas ! they had been friends in youth ;
But whispering tongues can poison truth ;
And constancy lies in realms above ;

And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs, which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between;—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,
He would proclaim it far and wide
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!
"And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek

My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men !"
He spake : his eye in lightning rolls !
For the lady was ruthlessly seized ; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend !

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain !
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me ! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid ! such sights to see ?)
Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound;
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest,
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light !
With new surprise,

"What ails then my beloved child ?"
The Baron said. His daughter mild
Made answer, "All will yet be well !"
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared, she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid !
And with such lowly tones she prayed,
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay !

Nay, by my soul !" said Leoline.
"Ho ! Bracy, the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.
And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard ! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

"Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
'Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array;
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam;'
And by mine honour! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—

—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing:
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing!—
"Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me;

That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath
the old tree.

"And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck,
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;

But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!
And thence I vowed this self-same day,
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up to wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine, in maiden wise,
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel—
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,

At Christabel she looked askance!
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing, that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind;
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view—
As far as such a look could be,
In eyes so innocent and blue!
And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused a while, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
"By my mother's soul do I entreat

That thou this woman send away!"
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same, for whom thy lady died!
O by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride.
That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild.
Dishonoured thus in his old age;
Dishonoured by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the wrong'd daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy

Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
"Why, Bracy ! dost thou loiter here ?
I bade thee hence !" The bard obeyed ;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine !

THE CONCLUSION TO PART II

A LITTLE child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other ;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true !)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks at it's most used to do.

NOTES

PART I.

Analysis *(ll. 1-22). According to the clock in Sir Leoline's castle, it is midnight. The cock has begun to crow, Sir Leoline's mastiff bitch howls sixteen times, and the night is chilly; it is a moonlit night, but the cloud obscures the moonlight. Being the month of April, Spring has only just commenced.*

1. *Christabel*, is principally a poem of "atmosphere"; everything is suggested, rather than described. In the opening lines of Part I, the poet's intention is to evoke the atmosphere of a chilly midnight as a fit background for his story of enchantment. Most stories of magic or enchantment have a midnight background. For instance, Faustus invokes the presence of Mephistopheles at midnight; and he is carried away by the devils at midnight. Macbeth calls the witches, "secret, black and midnight hags", as though there is a natural connection between magic and secrecy and midnight.

2. The silence of the night is suddenly disturbed when the castle clock strikes twelve; the cock awakens and crows, thinking that it is morning; the owls scream: "Tu-whit!—Tu-whoo"!

3. All the syllabes are stressed: Tū-whīt!—Tū-whoo!

5. *drowsily*, sluggishly; the cock is half-asleep, and hence crows but weakly or sluggishly.

6. Sir Leoline is the lord of the castle, a rich Baron.

7. *mastiff*, "large strong dog with drooping ears and pendulous lips." (C. O. D.) Sir Leoline, we are told, owns a female toothless dog.

8. *kennel*, a house-dog's place of shelter or resting-place; since the 'kennel' is "beneath the rock", Sir Leoline's castle is obviously built in a rocky locality.

9-10. The bitch, as she listens to the chime of the castle clock, answers by howling; four howls are for the four quarters of the last hour, and twelve howls are for the hour of twelve; in all, she howls sixteen times when the castle clock strikes twelve.

11. Ever and always, in all seasons, in sunshine as well as in rain.

13. *some say*, it is rumoured, it is asserted by some people; *my lady's shroud*, Lady Leoline's ghost. 'Shroud' is the sheet thrown over a dead body; Lady Leoline is dead and she appears in her winding-sheet to the bitch, who presumably recognizes her at once and emits her howls.

Midnight; owls; toothless mastiff bitch; cock crowing; the dog returning answer to the clock; all these contribute to the eerie atmosphere. And the casual reference to Lady Leoline's ghost is meant to intensify this feeling of strangeness, eeriness, that the reader already feels.

14-15. Keats also refers to the 'chill' and the 'owl' in his poem, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, which shows the influence of *Christabel*, in many places:

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.

Again and again, Coleridge exploits with unique success this "question and answer" method of suggestive narration. You would think the night was both chilly and dark; oh, no, it was chilly, it was dull, but it was not dark!

16-22. This is one of the memorable descriptions in the poem; quoting these lines, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch asks: "Was there ever such pure romantic music?" There is a full moon, but she looks both small and dull; her light, her splendour, is obscured—but not totally darkened—by the "thin grey cloud"; the night is chill, the cloud is grey, the moon is small, and the whole prospect is dull. It is such lines that make Mrs. Alice Meynell say that Coleridge "sees the sun and moon and the seasons and skies as apparitions". Being the month before the month of May, Spring has but just commenced—but Coleridge makes the whole thing disturbingly concrete by saying that Spring—another ghost or apparition!—"comes slowly up this way"! No doubt, Spring has to pursue the path marked by April, May and June!

The phenomenon here described is referred to also by Coleridge's friend, Wordsworth, and his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth. The clear full moon looks large and bright; but when it is obscured by clouds, the same moon looks small and dull. To Wordsworth, the obscured moon appears "a dull contracted

circle"; and according to Dorothy, when the clouds close in, they seem to contract "the dimensions of the moon without concealing her." It is likely that Coleridge borrowed the idea from either Dorothy or Wordsworth; but, as Mr. Hamilton Thompson points out, "Coleridge was capable of noticing such things for himself."

Analysis (*ll. 23-36*). *Christabel, beloved of her father, Sir Leoline, is alone in the forest late at night, praying for the welfare of her lover who is far away; silently, she is kneeling and praying beneath the huge oak tree.*

23. Mark how the four 'l's' contribute to the haunting music of the line.

25. What is she doing in the wood (i. e. the forest) so late ?

27. *yesternight*, the previous night.

28. *betrothed knight*, the knight who is to marry her.

30. *weal*, welfare. Clearly, Christabel had dreamed bad dreams of her absent lover; and hence she is now going to pray for his safety and general welfare.

31. *stole along*, went slowly, noiselessly.

33. There were no green leaves on the tree.

34. *misletoe*, more usually spelt 'mistletoe'; it is a parasitic plant growing on various trees, like the apple tree and the oak. Coleridge says that the old oak tree was bare of green leaves, though green moss and mistletoe covered it here and there.

The mistletoe of the oak tree was held in some veneration by the Druids of Old Britain; even now the mistletoe is used as a Christmas decoration,—the girl standing under the mistletoe is kissed by the finder! Hence the phrase,—kiss under the mistletoe. The oak tree and the mistletoe are thus vaguely suggestive items in the 'supernatural' machinery of the poem.

Rarest, because even the mistletoe is rather rare in winter or immediately after winter. Hence the very presence of the mistletoe on the oak is a fact of some mystery—a thing, perhaps, supernaturally contrived !

Analysis (*ll. 37-78*). *Christabel is suddenly disturbed in her silent prayers by a nearby moaning sound. It cannot be the wind that makes the moaning sound—for there is very little wind in the air. Christabel walks round to the other side of the oak and sees there a beautiful lady lying in some*

disorder. When asked to explain who she is, the lady says that she is too weary to speak; but, presently, she starts telling her story.

37. Christabel was kneeling and praying; but suddenly she sprang up, having been disturbed by the moaning sound that had started mysteriously.

40. Christabel hears a sound, but does not know the nature of the sound; she cannot say whether it is due to the wind blowing or due to somebody crying; all she knows is that it seems to come from the opposite side of the oak tree.

43. *the forest bare*, all the trees in the forest are leafless; thus the sound cannot be due to the rustling of the leaves.

44. *bleak*, sadly. Is it the wind that makes this mournful sound?

45-47. There is not wind enough in the air to move even a little the curly hair that covers the lady's cheek.

48-52. Dorothy Wordsworth, after a visit to Coleridge, made this note in her journal: "One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind." Coleridge too seems to have observed this "one only leaf" with a lively curiosity. The entry in Dorothy's Journal and the First Part of *Christabel* belong to the same period, i. e. 1798-9.

Red-leaf, mellowed, faded leaf; *clan*, tribe (i. e. this leaf was the last of the leaves that grew upon the tree during the previous year).

The idea in ll. 48-52 is that there is not wind enough to twirl (or spin or shake) this solitary leaf that, hanging lightly and so high, moves this side and that in obedience to the slightest movement in the air.

Commenting on these lines, Mr. Hamilton Thompson remarks: "The perfect adaptation of his (Coleridge's) elastic metre to the movement which it describes is noticeable."

53. The sudden sound rather frightened Christabel; even her heart-beats were, as it were, hushed into silence!

54. Christabel prayed to Jesus and Mary to protect her from any dangers that might be lurking nearby. The prayer is silently and involuntarily uttered by Christabel.

55. Christabel folded her arms under her cloak on account of the extreme cold.

60. In the pale moonlight, even the white silken robe appeared grey or shadowy.

61. An exquisite touch: the lady's neck was so exceedingly white and fair that it made her white silken robe look rather dull in comparison. Thus, the paleness of the moonlight and the whiteness of her neck are *both* responsible for the dull and shadowy appearance of her silken robe.

63. Everybody is, of course, blue-veined; but this lady's skin was so perfectly—transparently—white that the blue veins in her body could be seen through the skin. Since she was not wearing any sandals, her feet were altogether bare and their shining whiteness struck the beholder at once.

64-65. Her necklace was entangled in her dishevelled hair; and the gems of the necklace peeped through her hair and glittered in a strangely alluring and disturbing manner.

66-68. The presence of such a beautiful and gorgeously arrayed lady at the foot of the oak tree at midnight—lying in wild disorder and emitting mournful sounds—might well have caused a shudder in Christabel's bosom.

69-70. Christabel is at first afraid to address the strange lady; therefore she invokes the blessings of the Virgin Mother with a silent prayer, and then only addresses the lady.

71. (In reply to Christabel's question), the strange lady made a suitable answer.

72. *faint*, feeble, sickly.

73-74. I am so tired that I am hardly able to speak; have pity on my extreme wretchednes !

75. The lady asks Christabel to stretch forth her hand—for, as described in 1. 55, her arms are folded under her cloak—as a sign of friendly fellow-feeling.

76. It is to be supposed that Christabel does not stretch forth her hand but again asks the lady how she happened to come to that out-of-the way place all alone.

78. *pursue*—continue.

Analysis. *(ll. 79-103). The lady says that her name is Geraldine; she had been kidnapped by five warriors in the morning; she had been secured on the back of a horse; the whole day they had travelled and, when night came, one of the five had taken her from the horse's back and left her at the foot of the oak tree; they had vowed to come back soon. When they left her, she had*

become unconscious—it was the castle clock that awoke her. Having told her story, the lady requests Christabel once again to stretch forth her hand and help her to escape from her enemies.

79. *sire,* father; my father belongs to a distinguished and aristocratic family.

81. *warriors,* here the word signifies 'ruffians'; *yestermorn,* the previous morning. Christabel meets the lady soon after midnight: hence we can conclude that the lady must have been seized about 18 to 20 hours earlier.

82. The point is delicately stressed: *five warriors* seized *one lonely and helpless maid!*

83. They stopped my cries, half by bullying and frightening me, and half by closing my mouth with a piece of cloth or by resorting to similar means.

84. *palfrey,* saddle horse meant specially for ladies.

85. *fleet,* swift. Cf. Cowper: "How fleet is a glance of the mind!"

87. *spurred amain,* pricked vehemently; *steeds,* war-horses. Like the palfrey, the steeds also were white.

88. We thus travelled the whole day and even crossed the boundary of night.

89-90. In the name of God who is sure to help me and save me, I swear that I do not know who those five men were.

92. *wis,* an archaic expression meaning "I know well"; *entranced,* in a trance, in a swoon. The words in parenthesis mean: "I think I have been lying unconscious".

96. His companions spoke to me in an undertone.

98. He swore to him that they (he and the other four) would return soon.

102-3. Give me a helping hand and facilitate my escape from my enemies; i. e. the 'warriors' who have sworn to come back to me.

Analysis (*ll. 104-122*). *Hearing Geraldine's sad story, Christabel extends her hand to her and promises her that Sir Leoline will send her (Geraldine) safe to her own father's hall. As they walk slowly together, Christabel tells Geraldine that Sir Leoline being too weak in health, should not be disturbed till the morning: Geraldine can, however, sleep for the night in Christabel's room on the same couch.*

106-107. My father, Sir Leoline, will be glad to be of service to you; *dame*, an archaic word for 'lady.'

108. *stout chivalry*, our brave-hearted and chivalrous squires and other dependents.

109. *friends withal*, (not only our stout-hearted dependents) but friends also; *withal* is an archaic expression meaning "moreover" or "at the same time" or "as well."

110. *free*, free from all molestation or danger.

112-113. Geraldine stood up; she and Christabel now walked "with steps......that strove to be, and were not, fast." They wanted very much to walk at a brisk pace, but (Geraldine being extremely weak) they were unable to do so; *strove to be*, tried hard to be.

114. Geraldine expresses her thankfulness to Christabel for opportunely coming to her help. The idea is that Geraldine's "gracious stars"—the stars that exert a kind influence (upon her) have sent Christabel to redeem her (Geraldine) from her dreadful situation; hence she thanks her "gracious stars."

116-117. Everybody has gone to bed and hence our castle is now as silent as a cell; *cell*, a hermit's solitary room,—'cell' may also mean 'grave.'

119. It is not proper to awaken Sir Leoline at this odd hour.

120. *as if in stealth*, as if we are entering the castle secretly.

121. I beseech (i. e. beg) this favour of you (viz., that you will share your couch with me).

122. *couch*, bed. Christabel says: "It is not possible now to arrange for a separate room and bed for you; hence, for this night only, let us share the same bed."

Analysis. (*ll.* 123—174). *Walking together, Geraldine and Christabel cross the moat; Christabel opens the door in the middle of the gate, and they cross the court, and then the hall. Seeing them, the mastiff bitch moans angrily: when they pass, the dying fire leaps up into a sudden blaze. They find their way from stair to stair, and at last they enter Christabel's room.*

123. *moat*, a deep and wide ditch surrounding a town or castle, filled with water. The moat was a safeguard against a sudden assault on the town or castle. Air-power, however,

has now made moats and similar safeguards quite useless.

126. After crossing the moat over the bridge, Geraldine and Christabel reach the front gate ; Christabel opens the central door, and they are now able to enter the court of the castle.

127-128. Both inside, and outside, the gate was covered with iron ; in other words, the gate was so contrived that it could withstand the attacks of any powerful enemy. Further, the gate was so massive that at one time a whole army, equipped for battle, had marched through it without any inconvenience. These two lines thus vividly suggest that the gate was both *strong* and *huge*.

128. *in battle array*, suitably equipped for battle ; the gate was large enough to allow a well accoutred army to pass through it. This phrase also tells us that the castle had many heroic associations, and that Sir Leoline and his forefathers belonged to a warlike race.

129. When Christabel opened the door, the lady Geraldine, while attempting to cross the gate more or less fell down, as if she had been suddenly overcome by a spasm of pain or merely by exhaustion. It is not clear whether Geraldine only shammed this pain and the consequent fall, or whether these were due to other agencies. It is reasonable to suppose that, seeing her daughter in the company of this creature of evil, Christabel's guardian spirit—i. e. her mother's spirit—tries to prevent Geraldine's entry into the castle; but she does not succeed, for Christabel unsuspectingly lifts up Geraldine and takes her over the threshold of the gate.

130. *might and main*, with much physical force, with a great effort.

131. *weary weight*, the tired body of Geraldine.

132. *threshold*, the iron or stone bottom of the gate.

133-134. As soon as Geraldine crossed the threshold, she was able to get up and walk as though the pain had altogether ceased. This shows that her pain had only been induced by some mysterious power guarding the castle gate.

137-142. Here Christabel is warned that her companion is not what she pretends to be—but Christabel is too preoccupied with the events of the night to heed the warning. Christabel, as soon as they are safe within the castle, praises the divine Virgin for effecting Geraldine's escape ; but, being a creature of

evil, Geraldine does not want to join in the prayer of thanksgiving, but merely says : "I am too tired to speak!" Instead of making this excuse, she can, in a few words, pray to the divine Virgin for rescuing her from her distressing situation—but she will not do so ! Christabel, however, accepts the explanation and they cross the court, free alike from danger and fear.

144. *right glad*, very glad.

145-151. Here Christabel is warned a second time about Geraldine. As they cross the court, the mastiff bitch makes an angry moan without waking up. She has never before yelled like this in the presence of Christabel ; hence her yell can only be intended for Geraldine ! Even when asleep, the faithful mastiff bitch senses danger in Geraldine and indicates it with her angry yell. But Christabel's thoughts run otherwise : "Why does the dog yell in this angry manner ? She has never before done this in my presence. Is anything, then, wrong with the mastiff bitch ? Or is it really something else making the sound – the owlet, for instance?" Thus the second warning also is of no use and Christabel unfortunately proceeds to meet her doom unsuspectingly.

152. *scritch*, earlier form of 'screech,' angry scream ; *owlet*, young owl, but the word is sometimes used with reference to the full grown owl also.

152-153. The mastiff has never before made a similar moan in front of Christabel ; hence it cannot be the bitch—unless, of course, she is ailing. But, then, what can she be ailing from ? Perhaps, something quite other than the bitch is responsible for the sound—for instance, the owlet screeching !

154-155. Perhaps, here is one more warning to Christabel. When she and Geraldine cross the hall, they walk as noiselessly as possible, and still the hall echoes—yet another strange phenomenon! Like the bitch, even the very hall senses the evil in Geraldine and reacts strongly to it. But, once again, Christabel does not catch the significance of the unusual echoing in the hall.

156-163. This is a more pointed warning to Christabel. In the fire-place, the charred sticks are lying flat amidst the ashes and the fire is almost dying; but when Geraldine passes through the hall, there comes a sudden tongue of light, the brands catch fire

mysteriously, and the whole hall is illumined. Here Christabel *does* notice the suddenness of the flame and, perhaps just a little suspiciously, looks at her companion; but Geraldine's face appears to be innocent and Christabel suppresses her suspicious fears. Like the mastiff bitch and the hall, the fire also senses danger in Geraldine and warns Christabel—but all in vain.

156. *brands,* burning or charred logs of wood; the fire was going out and the brands were lying flat—*i. e.* they were not burning.

157. Part of the fuel was consumed and reduced to ashes; the remaining charred logs of wood were lying flat amidst the ashes.

159. *a fit of flame,* a sudden spurt or flash of flame; *a tongue of light,* a blinding blaze of light—as the brands burst into sudden flame, it appeared as if somebody suddenly threw out his tongue!

161. When Christabel turned to look at the lady Geraldine, she saw nothing in the least suspicious. Thus, though the sudden blaze gives Christabel a clear premonition of evil, she is reassured when she catches sight of Geraldine's seemingly innocent face.

162-63. All that Christabel saw was that the sudden blaze had illumined her father's shield, which was hanging in a corner of the hall. Perhaps, Geraldine was looking at the shield already; when Christabel turned to look at Geraldine, she also followed her gaze and caught sight of her own father's shield. Anyhow, Geraldine's action raised no suspicions in Christabel.

Boss, projection, round metal projection or stud in the centre of a shield; *murky,* dark, gloomy (Cf. "Hell is murky"); *niche,* recess in the wall to contain the shield.

166. *bare,* uncover; in other words, Christabel removes the sandals from her feet, since she is now within the castle; it is also likely that she removes the sandals, lest they should make more noise and thereby disturb Sir Leoline's slumbers.

167. *jealous of the listening air,* anxious lest their footsteps should echo in the silent air.

168. *steal their way,* walk noiselessly; *stair to stair,* from room to room ('stair' strictly means a set of in-door steps).

169. Part of the way is slightly illuminated, part is in total darkness ; this is indicated by the two words *glimmer* and *gloom* respectively.

170-171. As they pass by the Baron's room, they walk without making the slightest noise, controlling even their breaths, and giving no indication of life.

174. *rushes*, the leaves of a water-side plant used in former times for strewing floors with. As Geraldine entered Christabel's room, her feet touched the rushes strewn and the floor and pressed them down.

Analysis (175-219). *Christabel's room is contrived by clever workmen and sculptors like a real lady's chamber. Christabel trims the silver lamp and makes it bright. Meanwhile, Geraldine sinks upon the floor, as though she is very tired. Christabel offers her a cordial wine made out of wild flowers by her late mother. Geraldine is now suddenly frightened by some mysterious presence—probably the spirit of Christabel's mother—and cries out wildly. She presently recovers her poise and pretends that her fit has subsided and that she is all right once again.*

175-76. Although the moon shines outside, no ray of moonlight trickles into Christabel's room.

177. But Christabel and Geraldine can see even without the help of the moonlight.

178. *curiously*, extravagantly, attractively.

179-83. The description of the interior of Christabel's room has been justly praised. Mr. H. D. Trail writes: "Nowhere out of Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* is there any 'interior' to match that of Christabel's chamber, done as it is in little more than half a dozen lines". Coleridge only refers to "figures strange and sweet", but Keats elaborates the idea with a minute particularity in this passage :

> A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
> All garlanded with carven imageries
> Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
> And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
> Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
> As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings ;
> And in the midst, 'mongst thousand heraldries,
> And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,

A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings."

179-180. The figures are "strange and sweet"; i.e., at once beautiful and out of the common, all being only the creatures of the sculptor's exuberant fancy.

183. The lamp is hanging from the feet of the statue of an angel. (Cf. Keats: "The carved angels, ever eager-eyed.")

184. *dead and dim*, faint and lifeless; there is no "life" in the lamp i.e. it burns faintly, as if it is about to be extinguished.

185. *trim*, set right by removing the clogging parts; unless the burnt parts of the wick are "trimmed" or removed, the lamp will not burn brightly.

188. *in wretched plight*, feeling very tired.

191. *cordial wine*, medicinal drink.

192. *virtuous*, efficacious, healing; "it is a wine that will make you feel strong again."

193. *of wild flowers*, from the juice of wild flowers.

195. *forlorn*, unfortunate, in a pitiful condition.

198. *grey-haired friar*, aged priest. The word "friar" is ordinarily used with reference to the four mendicant orders of Franciscans, Augustines, Dominicans and Carmelites. The Franciscans are also called Grey Friars. (Cf. *Grey Eminence*, applied to the ascetic Franciscan, Father Joseph, who was Cardinal Richelieu's collaborator).

203. When Christabel says, "I wish my mother were with me," Geraldine, in the accents of hypocrisy, coos in chorus, "I too wish your mother were with us here!" But Geraldine finds that, to her great chagrin, the dead mother does in fact grant her hypocritical prayer and does appear before her; Geraldine is alarmed, and agitatedly asks the spirit to leave the room. It is to be supposed that Lady Leoline's spirit is visible only to Geraldine.

205. *wandering*, restless, moving from place to place; ghosts are supposed to be very restless. *Peak and pine*, waste away, disappear.

207-209. What is the matter with Geraldine—what is she ailing from—that she suddenly stares like this with a disturbed face? Can she actually *see* dead people?

211-213. Geraldine defiantly tells the spirit of Christabel's mother that the next hour at least is hers; Lady Leoline's spirit may be Christabel's guardian, but Geraldine will not be cheated

of her hour's triumph even by the guardian spirit! *'Tis given to me*, this hour has been assigned to me, this hour of triumph is due to me.

214-217. Geraldine's visible alarm when she perceives Lady Leoline's spirit and her agitated words ought to rouse Christabel's suspicions; Lady Leoline, her guardian spirit, puts Geraldine off her guard in order to jerk her daughter out of her trustful mood of complacency. But Christabel, having eyes, sees not, having ears, hears not; being innocent herself, she cannot suspect others; and hence she thinks merely that the ghastly ride has unhinged Geraldine's mind temporarily. Far from suspecting her, Christabel only pities Geraldine the more and wants to be of help to her!

215. She raised her blue (and beautiful) eyes to heaven—i.e. she mentally uttered a prayer for Geraldine's quick recovery.

216. *ghastly*, fearful, frightful.

217. *wildered*, bewildered, unhinged; "as a result of the fearful ride, your mind is unhinged and you know not what you say."

218. *moist cold brow*, the perspiring and cold forehead.

219. *'tis over now*, I am all right now.

Analysis (220-244). *Geraldine drinks some more wine and, regaining her strength, stands erect on the floor; she is alluring and strange, as if she has come from a distant place. She asks Christabel to undress and go to bed. But Christabel cannot sleep now, and hence she reclines on her elbow and observes Geraldine from the bed.*

220. *wild-flower wine*, i. e. wine extracted from wild flowers.

221. *'gan glitter bright*, began to shine brightly.

224-225. It is distance that often lends enchantment to the view; and a lady who has come from a distant country is for that very reason intriguing and most fascinating. Geraldine is both strange and beautiful; she bewitches the innocent Christabel as she later bewitches the Baron; and Christabel comes to grief partly because her love for Geraldine is the result of fascination rather than of understanding. These lines are reminiscent of the old ballad-poetry and yet achieve a haunting and typically Coleridgian romantic music.

226. *lofty*, dignified; tall and distinguished.

227. *upper sky*, above the sky, i. e. in heaven! *they*, the angels.

229-233. *for their sake*, as an offer of thanksgiving to the angels (who love you). Geraldine says that in her own way she will try to do a good turn to Christabel as an offer of thanksgiving.

231. *in my degree*, according to my means, in my own humble way.

232. *requite you well*, make return for the good you have done to me.

233-234. Geraldine asks Christabel to undress and go to bed; meanwhile, Geraldine will pray and, when the prayer is over, will share Christabel's couch.

237-238. These two lines, with their singular suggestiveness (or *dhwani*, as the Sanskrit rhetoricians call it) and rich pure music, constitute one of the peaks of romantic poetry in the whole range of English literature.

239-241. It was impossible for her (Christabel) to close her eyes (i. e. go to sleep) because many thoughts, some cheerful, some gloomy, coursed through her mind and thereby kept her awake. *Weal and* woe, welfare and misery, good and bad,—the words are now-a-days used always together; *lids*, eye-lids.

Analysis (*ll.* 245-278). *Slowly and with a shudder as it were, Geraldine too undresses; she neither speaks nor stirs for a time; her face shows sorrow and hesitation; but suddenly she seems to make up her mind and lies down by Christabel's side. She now takes Christabel in her arms and pronounces a charm upon her, which puts her under Geraldine's power.*

246. She slowly looked around herself.

247-249. Geraldine drew a deep breath, as if she shuddered, and then unloosed the belt from under her bosom. *Cincture*, belt, girdle.

250. *inner vest*, undergarment.

250-261. Cf. Keats:

By degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees.

255-259. These lines are in the present tense—indicating thereby that Geraldine is now in a mood of hesitation. Is she to pronounce her charm on Christabel or is she to spare her? Coleridge here seems to suggest that even a creature of evil is

not altogether free from the pangs of conscience. Satan too hesitates a little before he actually starts injuring the innocence of Adam and Eve. Satan and Geraldine, being alike powers of Evil, cannot but behave as tempters, deceivers and destroyers; and yet their initial hesitation slightly humanizes them.

256. Geraldine has a *stricken* (i.e. woebegone) look; in other words, she does not seem to relish what she has presently to do.

257-258. Geraldine seems to be weakly trying to lift a strange weight of sorrow that is—so to say—pressing her down. Geraldine has wormed herself into Christabel's confidence with the sole intention of depriving her of her freedom; but this work that she has set before herself is so cruel in itself that, like a heavy load, it seems to press Geraldine down. A creature of evil though she is, she is unwittingly moved by Christabel's beauty and purity and—though only for a minute—shrinks from her contemplated action. *Sick assay*, weak attempt.

259. We are to suppose that a sort of civil war is going on within Geraldine's mind. The human part, by contemplating Christabel's innocent and sweet face, finds fresh reasons for delaying the fatal action; but the devilish part ignores the pleadings of humanity and compels Geraldine to act at once.

260-261. Suddenly Geraldine makes up her mind; the devilish part in her has triumphed over the human; she now scorns her own humanity and is even proud of her vengeful, evil nature.

264. *well-a-day*, an exclamation indicating sorrow.

265. *doleful*, sorrowful; perhaps, even at the very moment of uttering the spell, Geraldine experiences a slight twinge of regret which reveals itself in her "doleful" look.

267-278. Mr. Hamilton Thompson comments as follows on these lines: "The spell which closes this part of the poem is the most ambitious part of Coleridge's metrical scheme. In the first four lines the metre gathers pace, which quickens throughout the five short lines, each containing two strong accents which follow. The long lines, at the end, uttered rapidly in a tone which rises to its highest pitch in 1.277 and sinks gradually to the close, mark the false Geraldine's complete triumph."

267-268. By permitting my bosom to touch yours, you have brought into play the power of my evil, which will henceforth

control your speech ; in other words, to touch my bosom is to come under my power. *Spell*, charm, magical incantation.

268. *is lord of thy utterance*, (the spell) will control your speech.

270. The "mark" and "seal" refer apparently to the sign on Geraldine's bosom— the sign that indicates that she has entered into a compact with the Devil ; Christabel henceforth *knows* Geraldine's secret, only she cannot speak about it, nor reveal it to her father !

271. *vainly thou warrest*, you struggle against your fate in vain. Perhaps Christabel shows some signs of resistance when she learns the secret about Geraldine ; but so great is Geraldine's evil power that the resistance is useless.

276. *surpassing fair*, exceedingly fair, incomparably beautiful.

277. *charity*, pity.

278. *damp*, cold.

The Conclusion to Part I.

Analysis (*ll. 279 331*). *Christabel, as she was kneeling and praying at the foot of the old oak tree, looked so innocent, so beautiful. Now she is lying by the side of Geraldine, and dreaming the most fearful dreams. Her eyes are open, and yet is she unconscious ; such a fearful change has come upon her. But, by her side, Geraldine is slumbering in ease, unmindful of the happiness she has wrecked. An hour passes; the hour of Gearldine's absolute triumph is over. The night birds are calling lustily and Christabel too comes out of her nightmarish trance ; she sheds tears of happiness and smiles like a child ; for she has now seen a sweet vision, the vision of her guardian spirit, the vision of her dead mother, Lady Leoline.*

282. *jagged*, uneven, irregular.

283. *boughs*, branches.

288. *bale*, evil, pain, misery ; i.e. her face seemed reconciled to happiness and misfortune alike.

289. *fair not pale*, i. e. though her face looked pale on account of the moonlight, it was really a most beautifully fresh and fair face.

290-291. Her eyes were shining, but they were not very clear because tears were just forming in them—tears of thankful-

ness and prayerful ecstasy.

292-295. This is a description of Christabel as she writhes in dumb agony, being under the absolute power of Geraldine. Christabel's eyes are wide open and yet are they expressionless; she is dreaming fearful visions—dreaming Hell, as it were. "Dreaming that alone, which is—", the blank is to be filled with the word "Hell". Geraldine's charm has stuffed poor Christabel's mind with nightmarish visions of evil and pain.

296-97. It is such a pity and such a shame that so fair and pure a lady like Christabel should thus be changed!

298. *worker of these harms*, i.e. Geraldine who has brought-about these fearful changes in Christabel.

302. *A star ......risen*, as time passes, one star sets and another rises. A whole hour has elapsed since, like a prison, Geraldine's arms clasped Christabel's body. The moment of at least partial deliverance has come!

306. *Thou'st had thy will*, you have had your wish; *tairn and rill*, lake and rivulet.

307. During Geraldine's hour of triumph, even the night-birds were still—so great was the power of Geraldine's spell!

308. At the end of the fateful hour, the night-birds find their tongues again and are singing happily—"Tu-whoo! tu-whoo!"

310. *fell*, mountain, moorland.

312. *Gathers......trance*, manages to come out of her trance; *trance*, dazed condition.

313-316. These lines give the reader, ever so exquisitely, a sense of relief that Christabel is again her own sweet and innocent self. Her limbs give signs of life, her face becomes tender and human, and her eye-lids gently close over her eyes; her eye-lashes are bright, she seems to shed tears; in short, she is again a human being, fair and sweet and innocent.

317-318. It is lines like these that deserve the epithet "seraphic", which Quiller-Couch applies to Coleridge's best poetry. In these two lines, Coleridge embodies a great truth. Children do suddenly—as it were, unaccountably,—smile when they are asleep; do they smile because they have seen "a sudden light", a light of truth? Even otherwise,—even in waking hours,—children are dazzled by a sudden light—an extra electric light for instance—and wreathe themselves in golden smiles.

Like the poet, perhaps more than the poet, the child too is of imagination all compact; and rightly therefore Sri Aurobindo apostrophizes:

God remembers in thy bosom
All the wonders that He wrought.

Christabel too smiled—smiled as a child does "at a sudden light"—and smiled because she saw the spirit of her dead mother, the spirit that will redeem her yet!

322. Christabel, like a young and solitary hermitess (or recluse), seems to be praying in her sleep. A true hermitess will make her whole life a prayer—all she does is a prayer, an offering, to God.

323-325. Occasionally Christabel seems to move her feet this way and that; but this only shows that blood is again coursing through her veins and that her body is no more under the control of Geraldine. *Perchance*, perhaps ("perhaps you notice the legs moving, etc."); *tingles*, reddens (the white feet redden, as it were, due to the fresh blood coursing through her veins).

326. *She has a vision sweet*, she is seeing a kind and inspiring vision.

327-328. Christabel thinks that it is her guardian spirit, that it is, indeed, the spirit of her dear mother. The question is asked, only to be answered in the affirmative!

329-331. Prof. S. F. Gingerich thinks that these three concluding lines of Part I might have appeared in *The Ancient Mariner*. Indeed, these lines, giving expression as they do to Christabel's firm faith, make us also feel that Geraldine's triumph cannot be a final one.

330. If only men seek it, divine help is a sure thing. Cf. Milton:

So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt...

331. *blue sky*, i.e. Heaven. God is the protector of all. This line inevitably brings to the mind these lines in *The Ancient Mariner*:

For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Part II.

Analysis (*ll.* 332—359). *It is the custom in Sir Leoline's castle for the sacristan to count the beads and mutter prayers forty-five times between two consecutive strokes of the morning bell. This is so because, according to Sir Leoline, life is really a living death. When the sacristan rings the bell, the sounds are taken up by the ghosts of three other sacristans in the neighbouring country and each matin bell thus echoes far and wide. When the three echoing sounds cease, the devil himself concludes the series with a merry peal from Borrowdale.*

332. *matin bell*, bell rung at the time of morning prayer. "Matins (*hoare matutinae*) was the first office of the day in the mediaeval church, said in monasteries at midnight, but frequently in churches, not monastic, at dawn." (Hamilton Thompson) *Saith*, an archaic word for "says."

333. *knells*, sounds mournfully. According to the Baron, the so-called life is really lingering death ; hence, the matin bell is more properly described as a death-knell that brings us back to a world of death.

334-337. This pessimistic and gloomy view of life was first expressed by Sir Leoline on the day he learned of his wife's sudden death ; and he has not changed his view all these years, and he will stick to this view to his dying day. The underlying idea is that, ever since his wife's death, life has ceased to be interesting to Sir Leoline ; it is to him little better than a slow and painful death.

339. *sacristan*, sexton of a parish church, person charged with the care of church vessels, vestments, etc. (Latin *sacrista*).

341. *beads*, prayer. (Anglo-Saxon, *biddan*, to beg or to pray). The word is now also applied to the small perforated balls that compose a rosary ; the heads are fingered one by one as the prayers are said. In India, many orthodox people wear *rudraksha* garlands and say their prayers counting the beads.

342. Each stroke of the matin bell is loud and mournful, and the people who live between Bratha Head and Wyndermere cannot but listen to it.

244. Part I of *Christabel* defines no specific locality. The night is chilly, the moon is dull ; there is the old oak tree ; there is also the ancient castle—that is all. It all might be in

Britain or in France or anywhere else. In Part II, however, Coleridge is at pains to define the scene of action clearly. We are in England,—in the Lake country ; *Bratha Head*, the head of the stream Brathay ; the river flows into Windermere at its north-west end, close to Ambleside.

345. *Bracy the bard*, Bracy is Sir Loeline's musician, poet, and informal adviser. There is, perhaps, little love lost between the bard and the sacristan, since he reacts so viciously to the ringing of the matin bell.

348-349. There is no lack of sacristans to fill (with *their* matins) the interval between the strokes of the bell in Sir Leoline's castle. *I ween*, I think, I suppose (Anglo-Saxon, *wenan*, suppose, imagine).

350-351. *Langdale Pike*, the name of a rocky mountain at the head of the valley by name Langdale in Westmoreland ; *Witch's Lair*, a chasm, also in Westmoreland ; *Dungeon-ghyll*, a chasm between two peaks in the same district ; *so foully rent*, refers to the above chasm that sharply divides two peaks in the Longdale valley.

352-355. Three sinful sextons' ghosts are inhabiting Langdale Pike, Witch's Lair and Dungeon-ghyll respectively : they make ropes of rocks and bells of air ; and even so give back the death-note to their living brother, viz., the sacristan in Sir Leoline's castle. When the wind blows against the rocks a shrill sound is often produced ; this phenomenon is here interpreted as the peal of the death-note sounded by the ghosts of former sextons.

353. Why does Coleridge say—*sinful* sextons' ghosts ? This is perhaps the explanation : the sextons had died unreconciled to God and that is the reason why their ghosts are still ligering on the earth, reproducing the actions of their actual life. Lady Leoline's spirit is of a different kind ; it re-visits the earth only as her daughter's guardian spirit.

356-359. And many a time, offended as it were by this gloomy sound, as soon as the three death-notes die away, the devil himself sends from Borodale a merry counter-blast, as a mocking challenge to the sacristans' 'matin bells.' *Doleful tale*, series of mournful sounds. *Borodale*, Borrowdale, a valley, a little beyond the hills from Langdale.

Analysis (*ll.* 360-392). *When she istens to the devil's*

jubilant voice, Geraldine rises from her bed and awakens the lady Christabel also. For a little while, Christabel is not sure whether the Geraldine she sees is the sinful Geraldine she had met (or had she only dreamt of her?) last night or whether it is rather a pure-minded and innocent lady. In spite of her confusion, Christabel greets Geraldine kindly and leads her to meet Sir Leoline.

360-361. The merry peal travels through the mist and cloud and thus breaks the silence of the air.

362. The merry peal, since it comes from the devil, reassures Geraldine that all is well; she is hence encouraged to shake off her fear.

364. *vestments*, garments.

365. *tricks......plight*, or, as we should say to-day, combs her hair in an attractive manner.

366. *nothing......spell*, not doubting in the least that her spell is still effectively operating.

370-373. At first, Christabel remembers Geraldine as the lady with the stain on her bosom who shared her couch last night; presently, on scrutinizing her more closely, Geraldine appears more like the fair and innocent lady who lay groaning last night at the foot of the old oak tree—if anything, only more fair than she appeared to be then!

375-376. Walter Pater comments on these lines (as also on 385-386) as follows:—"Here, too, the work is of a kind peculiar to one who touches the characteristic motives of the old romantic ballad, with a spirit made subtle and fine by modern reflection".

375. *belike*, probably.

377. *her air*, her gestures.

378. *blessedness*, happiness. The idea is that Geraldine is exceedingly fresh and beautiful, thanks to her restful sleep. These two lines may be compared with the last two lines of *Kubla Khan:*

> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise.

378. *declare*, reveal.

379-380. Her robes, swelling when her breasts heaved, appeared to tighten under her belt; *girded*, belted.

381-382. Christabel's thoughts run somewhat as follows:

"Isn't this lady the one who had the stain of sin on her bosom and worked her spell on me last night? But, then, she looks so beautiful, so innocent! Perhaps, they are two different persons; perhaps, I have merely experienced a hideous nightmare. If so, I have sinned in thinking ill of this lady. In any case, since she seems to be all right and all seems to be well, let me praise God!"

383. *faltering tones*, unsteady voice.

385-386. Even though she greeted Geraldine, Christabel's mind was confused still, as though she had dreamed vivid and disturbing dreams.

387-388. *arrayed... . limbs*, put on her robes.

388-390. *having...unknown*, having prayed to the Saviour (Jesus Christ), who suffered on the Cross, that He will now wash away the sins she may have committed unawares.

Analysis (*ll.*393-407). *Christabel leads Geraldine to Sir Leoline's room. After embracing his own daughter, he gives proper welcome to the lady Geraldine. He learns her story and learns also that her father is Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine. This suddenly and unaccountably upsets the Baron.*

395. *page*, liveried servant; *groom*, servant in charge of horses.

396. *presence room*, room in which guests are received.

399. *cheerful wonder*, glad surprise.

400. *espies*, sees, observes.

400-401. He welcomed her (Geraldine) in a way that might have seemed appropriate to so distinguished a lady.

405. *waxed*, grew.

407. *Tryermaine*, or Triermain, an ancient castle whose ruins are said to exist even to-day. It is close to Gilsland. Scott introduces the castle as well as a Roland de Vaux into his *The Bridal of Triermain*. The family of Vaux owned Triermain castle for four centuries, from the eleventh to the fifteenth century.

Analysis (*ll.*408-430). *Sir Leoline and Lord Roland de Vaux had been formerly friends; but busy-bodies and scandal-mongers poisoned their friendship. Through misunderstanding, each spoke harsh words to the other, and so they parted—and never met again. But neither of them was afterwards able ta find another equally true friend. Their friendship shattered, they now stood like two cliffs cleft in two with a deep chasm between*

them. As Sir Leoline now gazes upon Geraldine's face, it appears rather like the face of the youthful Lord Roland, so familiar to him in former times.

408-427. These are among the most beautiful lines that Coleridge ever wrote—and himself Coleridge called them his "best and sweetest" lines. It was this passage that reconciled Charles Lamb to Coleridge's attempting a continuation of the first part of *Christabel.* Lamb's view was that the high level of Part I could not be maintained in the sequel: "I was very angry with Coleridge when first I heard that he had written a second canto, and that he intended to finish it; but when I read the beautiful apostrophe of the two brothers it calmed me." Further, Mr. Hamilton Thompson thinks that Coleridge, when he wrote this passage, had probably in mind his own temporary separation from Charles Lamb, due to the "whispering tongue" of Charles Lloyd; the two became friends once again in 1800, when much of the second part of *Christabel* was written. On the other hand, according to Kathleen E. Royds, "perhaps Coleridge was thinking of his disagreement with Southey over the Pantisocracy when he wrote the lines." In any case, these lines, to quote Walter Pater, "leave almost every reader with a quickened sense of the beauty and compass of human being;" and "they embody one of those perfect and final definitions of the ordinary experiences of life which are among the highest achievements of poetry." (Hamilton Thompson). Mr. H. D. Traill, in his monograph on Coleridge in the *English Men of Letters* series, points out that "the ultimate test of poetry...... is its treatment of actualities—its relations to the world of human action, passion, sensation, thought," and he complains that Coleridge's poetry, granted all its witchery and beauty, "at no moment succeeds in convincing us ......that the poet had found his true vocation;" but these lines on friendship do in fact so convince us.

410. True constancy flourishes only in Heaven; *constancy*, faithfulness; *realms above*, i. e. Heaven.

412. *wroth*, angry.

413. (anger) heats the brain and makes us behave as though we are mad.

414. *divine*, guess.

416. *disdain*, scorn, contempt.

419. *another*, i. e. another friend.

420. *hollow heart*, friendless, hence 'hollow,' heart.

421. *scars*, the memory of the bitter words they had spoken to one another.

422-423. Two cliffs that were once joined together are now flung apart, and only a dismal sea flows between them; even so, the former friends, Sir Leoline and Lord Roland, are now separated, and only a sea of misunderstanding flows between them.

426. *The marks......been*, the memory of their former friendship.

This simile of the parted cliffs recurs also in the following passage in Byron, which is cited by Mr. Hamilton Thompson:

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted!
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed;
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters—war within themselves to wage.

427. *a moment's space*, for the duration of a moment, for a short time.

430. He remembered once again the youthful face of his former friend, Lord Roland of Tryermaine.

Analysis (*ll. 431—482*). *Now the Baron forgets his age and full of anger affirms that he will punish the men who have so infamously wronged Geraldine. He will challenge them to combat and kill them there and then. He also tearfully takes Geraldine in his arms, and she too meets his embrace readily. Meanwhile, Christabel sees—as in a flash—the real Geraldine; for a while she is awed and horror-stricken; but presently she sees her guardian spirit, and she is once again calm, and she is even able to smile rapturously. To her father's query, she merely replies, "All will yet be well!" While Christabel knows the truth, but cannot reveal it, Sir Leoline is wholly deceived by appearances and looks upon Geraldine as a thing divine; and Geraldine cunningly begs him to send her away to her father's castle, since she does not want to be a source of annoyance to Christabel.*

431. The Baron felt again like a young man.

435. *with trump......heraldry,* with trumpets and armorial bearings,—in other words, with all due dignity and pomp.

437. *spotted infamy,* infamy brought home by branding the body. This is a reference to the custom of branding criminals so that they may be recognized by one and all.

438. *deny the same,* deny the charge.

440. *recreant,* cowardly.

441. *tourney,* tournament.

442. *dislodge,* expel ; *reptile souls,* vicious souls.

444. *his eye......rolls,* his eye rolls in anger.

445. *For......seized,* (he is angry) because the lady had been cruelly and brutally seized and brought away from her home (by the miscreants) ; *kenned,* discovered.

450. *prolonging...look,* with her overjoyed look increasing the pleasure of the embrace.

451-453. When Christabel saw Geraldine looking so overjoyed, she suddenly remembered that other vision—the vision of Geraldine, with the stain on her bosom, uttering her spell—and she remembered, she *felt,* the fearful vision, the touch of that bosom, and the consequent pain. Christabel, in short, re-lived her last night's agony.

454. The memory of the vision made Christabel recoil from Geraldine, and shudder—and now she saw the serpent in Geraldine once again.

455-456. The words in parenthesis express the poet's own sense of pity that so gentle and innocent a maid as Christabel should nonetheless be fated to see such cruel sights, and undergo such painful experiences.

457. *that bosom,* the bosom she had seen and felt last night.

460. *Whereat...round,* (when he heard the hissing sound), the Knight turned round angrily.

463-470. Soon the vision of her guardian spirit took the place of the vision of the snake-like Geraldine. Last night too, her guardian spirit had comforted her immediately after Geraldine's hour of triumph ; as she felt last night, now also Christabel felt a transfiguring happiness in her heart, and her face and eyes beamed with utter joy. *Rapture,* supreme happiness, ecstatic delight.

472. Christabel now fully realizes the serpent-nature of Geraldine, but she is unable to speak out; it is her faith in the power of her guardian spirit that makes her hope and say: "All will yet be well!"

474. *aught*, anything.

475. *he*, i. e. the Baron.

477. Her manner betrayed a cunning admixture of sorrow and grace, or regret and joy—regret that she should have somehow offended sweet Christabel and joy that the Baron loved her as if she were his own daughter.

Analysis (*ll. 483-518*). *Sir Leoline calls Bracy the bard and entrusts him with the task of proceeding to Tryermaine and informing Lord Roland of his daughter's safety. Bracy is also to invite Lord Roland, with all his retinue, to Sir Leoline's castle*; *and the Baron will meet Lord Roland halfway and express regret for the insulting words he had spoken long ago. And so they will be friends again.*

483. *Nay*, no; ("I shall not send you home, but I shall invite your father to my castle and he will take you back").

484. *the charge be thine*, let this work be done by you, I entrust you with this charge.

486. *steeds*, horses; *trappings proud*, attractive harness.

488. *harp*, a stringed musical instrument; *to bear thy harp*, (literally) to carry the harper's instrument, to assist the harper during the journey.

489. *solemn vest*, impressive robes.

493. *he*, the Baron really means "you", since it is addressed to Bracy the bard; *Irthing flood*, a river rising in the north-east of Cumberland and flowing past Gilsland.

495. Knorren Moore and Halegarth Wood lie between Irthing flood and the Triermain castle.

496. *that castle good*, Lord Roland's castle named Triermain.

497. Triermain formed a link in the chain of defences against Scottish freebooters; hence "threatens Scotland's wastes" means "stands as a stern warning to Scottish adventurers or marauders." "Wastes" signify men who plunder and lay waste the country.

500. Your music is more ringing and sweet than the tread of your horses' foot-steps.

506. *array*, retinue, attendants.

510. He (Sir Leoline) will come so fast, so eager to meet you half-way, that you will be able to see the foam on the mouths of his panting horses.

513. *disdain*, scorn, contempt.

515-518. Although many years have elapsed since the hour I quarrelled with Lord Roland, I have never again found a friend to equal him.

Analysis (*ll.* *519-563*). *Bracy the bard answers the Baron as follows: "It is always a pleasure to obey you, but, by your permission, let me not go on my journey to-day. I dreamed last night that the dove, by name Christabel, which you and your daughter alike love, was lying on the ground and screaming in pain. On looking closer at it, I found that a snake had coiled around its wings and neck. Presently, I awoke and found that it was midnight. To-day I wish to wander in the forest and drive away with my saintly songs the snake-like, unholy creature that, according to my dream, is loitering there".*

519-520. The Baron's speech calls forth the appropriate response from Geraldine. She kneels before him, clasps his knees, raises her face to him, and shows her welling eyes—welling with tears of gratitude!

522. *His......bestowing*, offering his gracious salutation to all the assembled company.

523-524. Your words sound sweeter to me than the music produced by my harp.

525-526. If I should obtain a boon from you, it would be this, viz., that my journey need not be undertaken to-day.

529. *thing unblest*, vicious or sinful creature.

530. *vision*, dream; *rest*, sleep.

535. This line is rightly described by Mr. Hamilton Thompson as "a remarkable example of the wedding of sound to sense." The bird was moving about agitatedly and uttering agonizing cries.

541. *methought*, it seemed to me.

545. *peered*, looked at it; *descry*, discover, see.

552. *crouched*, bent; the snake arched its head towards the bird's head.

553-554. The snake has coiled completely round the bird and they are now one in appearance; hence, whenever the bird

breathes or stirs, the snake also appears to do so.

556. *echoing*, ringing.

560. *this self-same day*, this very day.

561. *saintly song*, purifying song, music that will purge the forest of all impure influences.

563. *aught unholy*, any vicious creature, any creature of evil.

Analysis (*ll. 564-620*). *When Bracy concludes, the Baron, supposing that the dove in the dream signified Geraldine, tells her: "Your father and I will kill the snake (i. e. your enemies)". Geraldine blushingly turns away from the Baron and archly fixes upon Christabel the dull, small, malicious eyes of a snake: immediately Geraldine's look reverts to its previous brightness and she meets the Baron's gaze. As for Christabel, she shudders aloud with a hissing sound, she has no thought but the memory of the serpent-glance; her own eyes shrink in irresistible response into the smallness and maliciousness of the serpent-eye; and she stares at her own father with this deformed look. After a little while, her features relax, she is again her own sweet self: she prays inwardly and, kneeling before her father, earnestly entreats him to send Geraldine away at once. The spell is still so strong that she is unable to say more by way of explanation.*

565. *half listening*, clearly, Geraldine has bewitched the Baron, for he but partially listens to Bracy's speech.

569. The Baron, with a fatal facility, jumps to the conclusion that the dove in the dream refers only to Geraldine, the snake no doubt signifying the "five warriors" who had seized her by force the previous day.

573. *in maiden wise*, behaving like a maiden.

576. *she turned her from*, the "her" is dropped in modern English. Other examples in the poem are "This dream *it* would not" (l. 558), "I repent *me* of this day" (l. 512), etc.

577. *train*, "elongated part of woman's skirt trailing on the ground" (C. O. D.). Geraldine lifted the lower end of her flowing skirt.

580. She bent her head so low that it seemed to touch her breast.

581. *askance*, sideways.

582. Geraldine is looking at Christabel sideways—with a malicious intention. Hence the prayer that Jesus and Mary

should shield Christabel from the machinations of the snake, like Geraldine.

583. Here are but eight familiar monosyllabic words, and yet they do miraculously achieve a forcible and realistic description of the snake's characteristic gaze.

586. *With somewhat......dread*, expressing hatred but much more awe; consequently inspiring in Christabel also hatred, awe, and fear.

588. The enchantment lasted only one moment—and Geraldine's snake-gaze disappeared at once.

589-610. This is one of the supremely evocative passages in the whole range of romantic poetry. Here Coleridge attempts with striking success a creepy suggestion of enchantment by daylight. Shelley is said to have fainted when he had this passage read to him first. Here again, as Kathleen Royds rightly points out, "the description is not so much of the sight Christabel beholds, as of its effect on her, and thus it takes possession of the imagination with a sense of horror all the stronger from its vagueness". Geraldine has done her daylight enchantment in a trice and turned her back on the evil she has evoked ; it is Christabel who suffers in a mute agony of helplessness.

589-591. As if dazed and unconscious, Christabel tottered unsteadily on the ground, and shuddered and hissed aloud.

592-596. Having done the mischief, Geraldine pretends to be astonished and sorrow-stricken, and (as if to show that *she* is not responsible for the change in Christabel's countenance) looks at Sir Leoline with her bright and seemingly "divine" eyes.

593. As if she (Geraldine) sought relief from Christabel's snake-gaze and shudder and hissing sound.

595. Geraldine's eyes are now large, bright, and divine, whereas, a minute ago, they were small, dull and vicious.

596. *The maid*, i. e. Christabel.

597. *no sight but one*, i. e. she sees only Geraldine's serpent-gaze.

599. *devoid .....sin*, although an innocent and clear-eyed lady; *guile*, deceit, cunning.

600-606. (Although Christabel was a guileless and sinless maid), she had somehow, in a fearful manner, assimilated the

small, dull, hateful snake-stare of Geraldine; and now, only this sole dreadful image remained in Christabel's mind; she even herself dumbly imitated this look of dull and treacherous hate!

608. *Still......askance*, still vividly imagining to herself Geraldine's sideways look.

609. Geraldine's spell has forced Christabel unconsciously to imitate the serpent-stare.

611-612. Christabel's eyes were ever so innocent and blue; their innocence and beauty could not disappear even under the influence of Geraldine's spell; they were but slightly tinged by that serpent-look of dull and treacherous hate ; but even so, the change was clearly noticeable !

613-620. As in ll. 463-464, the trance of dumb pain is followed by a mood of relaxation; Christabel now is fully convinced of Geraldine's serpent-nature and makes one bold attempt to get rid of her. She earnestly entreats her father to send Geraldine—*this woman*—away; but she is yet under the iufluence of the spell and she cannot explain the reasons that prompt her to make this request.

617. *this woman*, Christabel no more calls her "lady"—she is but a woman; a mysterious woman who has come to wreck Christabel's happiness !

Analysis *(ll. 621-655). This request throws Sir Leoline into some confusion. On the one hand, he loves his daughter; his wife had died praying for the welfare of his daughter; Christabel, his child and his late wife's child, is doubly dear to him. On the other hand, by making this request, Christabel has dishonoured him, spoilt his hospitality to his friend's daughter. He suddenly makes up his mind, orders Bracy to go on his errand at once, and, leaving Christabel alone, leads forth the lady Geraldine.*

621. *wan and wild*, pale and angry.

625. *the lady*, Lady Leoline; it is to be remembered that Lady Leoline died immediately after Christabel's birth.

626. *pangs* refer to Lady Leoline's labour pains.

629. *she*, Lady Leoline.

632. Her dying prayer made her forget even her pains.

636 639. If the Baron had such thoughts as these—thoughts of Lady Leoline and her dying prayer—they only increased his anger and sense of hurt and created confusion in his mind.

640. *pain and rage*, pain because he had to displease his daughter, rage because she had insulted his friend's daughter; his heart was cleft in two by these two contrary emotions.

646. The Baron thinks that it is Christabel's jealousy—"more than woman's jealousy"—that has made her ask him to send away Geraldine. He thinks that Christabel is envious of the favour Geraldine has found in his eyes.

650. *austere*, severe.

651. Why, Bracy, why are you still loitering here?

652. I sent you away on an errand!

The Conclusion to Part II.

Analysis (*ll.* 656-677). *As a little child—a nimble fairy-like child with beautiful cheeks—Christabel was always happy and always gladdened her father's eyes. On this occasion, however, he treated her roughly; but this was due to the very excess of his love. It is strange that contradictory thoughts—love and anger—should sometimes live together; it is strange that people should love and at the same time say or do cruel things to the objects of love. But such "giddiness of heart and brain" is generally caused by anger and pain.*

656. *limber*, nimble; *elf*, here the word means "a little creature."

658. *a fairy thing*, a bewitching fairy-like child.

659. The child does not seek happiness; she finds it everywhere and in everything.

660-661. Observing his child—observing her as she sang and danced in unalloyed happiness—the Baron's own eyes filled with the light of happiness.

662-665. And he loved her more and more—visions of happiness came to him thick and fast—till at last (on this occasion) the very extremity of his affection for Christabel made him say words of bitterness. Actually, the Baron spoke no words of bitterness to Christabel; but his peremptory command to Bracy is as good as an indirect reply to Christabel's request.

664. *unmeant bitterness*, The bitter words are spoken by the mouth, but in his heart of hearts the Baron does not mean them—his anger is but a passing mood.

666-669. The conjunction of such unlike thoughts—love within, bitterness without, indifference to a daughter's earnest

entreaty and admiration for a deceptively dangerous creature like Geraldine—is certainly a strange thing!

668. *pretty*, here used (probably) in the sense of "strange" or "ominously funny"; *to force together*, to permit (their) existing together.

668. This and the following lines (and, in fact, many of the lines in the Conclusion to Part II) are very obscure. *To mutter ...broken charm*, to treat with seeming contempt even his own love for his daughter—it is as though his love has become a "broken charm"—by refusing her request.

669. *To dally.........harm*, to play with Geraldine (the principal source of evil) thinking that she will do no harm: he has not personally seen her evil nature—and so he thinks it is safe to cherish her, although his own daughter has warned him against her.

670-672. While the Baron is unjust to his daugher, there is still this redeeming feature in his conduct: even as his tongue utters wild and angry words, his heart wells up with tenderness and pity for Christabel.

673-677. Ours is a world of sin, of imperfection—and it is such a shame and such a source of sorrow to us that this is so! In such an imperfect world, when one's brain and heart grow confused (more as a result of anger and pain than otherwise), one cannot help talking like this—using "words of unmeant bitterness."

675. *giddiness*—confusion.

677. A confused—misunderstanding—mind talks even like this (as Sir Leoline did); *as it's most used to do*, as such a confused mind may be expected to do, or is accustomed to do.

PARAPHRASE

Part 1.

The castle clock shows that it is midnight; the owls have awakened the cock, and it now crows: "Tu-whit !—Tu-whoo"! Half asleep, the cock thus weakly crows again and again: listen !

Sir Leoline, the rich Baron (who owns the castle), has a toothless, old female dog which, from her shelter under the rock, answers the chime of the castle clock. Every night at the hour of twelve, in all seasons, the dog howls—though not very loud —sixteen times: twelve short howls to indicate the hour of twelve and the remaining four howls to indicate that one more hour, with its four quarters, has been completed. It is rumoured that the dog actually sees at midnight the ghost of Lady Leoline.

You will ask if the night is chilly as well as dark ; the night is chilly no doubt, but not dark, for the cloud that is spread over the sky is very thin and hence does not completely hide the full moon that is shining in the sky. However, the night is very cold, a grey cloud is visible in the sky and the moon looks small and faint. It is now the month previous to the month of May, and hence Spring has just commenced, and the beauties of Spring are only slowly unfolding themselves.

What is the lovely Christabel—whom her father, Sir Leoline loves so much—doing in the forest at so late an hour ? and at a distance of a furlong from the castle gate ? Throughout last night she dreamed of the knight who is betrothed to her and now she is praying at midnight in the forest for the welfare of this knight who has gone to a distant place.

A little while ago, she went slowly and silently, heaving soft and noiseless sighs, to the old oak tree in the forest; the tree was bare of leaves, only moss and mistletoe (a very rare thing in winter) here and there covering it; and, having reached the tree, she now kneels at its foot and prays in deep silence.

Suddenly the lovely Christabel sprang up, because she heard a moan very near to her—what it was she could not say—and it seemed to come from the other side of the huge, broad, old oak tree.

The night is chilly and the forest is bare of leaves. Is, then, the sound of the moan merely the wind dully blowing? It cannot be; for there is no wind at all—the wind is not strong enough to move even a little the beautiful curly hair that is seen covering the lady's cheek! On the topmost branch of the oak tree—the branch that is, as it were, looking up at the sky—there is a solitary leaf, a faded dried-up leaf, the only leaf that is yet clinging to the tree; hanging lightly, this leaf is moving this side and that with the slightest movement in the air. But now there is no wind in the forest strong enough to shake even this solitary leaf.

Christabel's heart is beating fast: may Jesus and Mary protect her! She folded her arms under her cloak and went slowly to the further side of the oak to see what was there.

Christabel saw there a beautiful girl, clothed in white silk: in the pale moonlight, the silken robe appeared shadowy; moreover, her neck was so white that it made even the white silk appear dull in comparison; her stately neck was bare, and so were her arms; being alike bare, her white feet revealed the blue veins within; the gems of her necklace were caught up here nad there in her hair, and these gems glittered in a strange manner. Certainly, it must have been a fearful thing to see in such a lonely place a lady so very beautiful and so grandly dressed.

Christabel muttered to herself, "Mary mother, save me now," and, turning to the lady, asked her to say who she was.

The lady at once replied, and her voice was weak but pleasing to the ear: "I am so weary that I can hardly speak, and so please take pity on my present plight; don't be alarmed, but lend me your helping hand." In reply, Christabel asked the lady to explain how she happened to come to such a lonely place. The lady, in her weak but pleasing voice, then told her story:—

"My name is Geraldine, and my father is a nobleman; yesterday morning, five wild men seized me, although I am such a lonely, helpless maid; when I cried, they forcibly stopped my cries, and tied me on a white horse. The horse was swift, and as it ran as fast as wind, they too, on their white horses, spurring them forward, rode behind me; and thus we rode a whole day and crossed the boundary of night. In the name of God who is

sure to rescue me, I do not know who those five men were. As soon as we came to this forest, one of them took me from the horse's back and put me here at the foot of the oak—I was then most tired, hardly alive,—and he muttered some words to his companions and said that they would all return quickly; I do not know how long ago this happened, because I think I have been lying here in a swoon; but a few minutes ago, I seemed to hear sounds that appeared to me the ringing of a castle-bell. (Now that you know my story), please lend me a helping hand and enable me—an unfortunate maid—to escape from my enemies". Thus she ended her story.

Now Christabel stretched forth her hand and comforted the fair Geraldine with these words: "Don't worry, fair maid; you are entitled to my father's, Sir Leoline's, protection; he will send forth our chivalrous relations and friends to guard you and take you back safely to your noble father's house."

Geraldine now got up, and they walked together; they tried, but (being weak) they were unable to walk briskly. Geraldine blessed her kind stars (for her rescue), and the kind-hearted Christabel addressed her thus: "Everybody has gone to sleep in our castle, and hence it is now as silent as a secluded room in a monastery. Further, Sir Leoline is in weak health, and should not be disturbed at so late an hour. Hence we will enter the castle noiselessly and I request you to be good enough to sleep with me in my couch to-night."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel, taking out the proper key, directly opened a little door in the middle of the gate. (Through this gate a whole well-accoutred army had marched out on one occasion, and even now the gate is protected with iron within and without.) Geraldine, as if through pain, almost collapsed; and Christabel with all her strength carried the tired lady across the gate. Geraldine now stood up once again, and walked on as though her pain had ceased.

Freed alike from danger and fear, they crossed the court of the castle, and they were indeed very glad. And Christabel, in a thanksgiving and pious mood, told Geraldine: "Let us now praise the divine Virgin who has rescued you from a great peril!" But Geraldine answered simply: "Alas, I am too tired to speak!" Anyhow, freed alike from danger and fear, they crossed the court, and they were indeed very glad.

(As they crossed the court), outside her shelter, the old dog was sleeping soundly in the chilly moonshine. Although she did not actually wake up, she made an angry moan as Christabel and Geraldine passed. Never before had the dog yelled like this in the presence of Christabel—was something, then, the matter with the dog ? Or was the moan really nothing else than the owlet's cry? Or, if the dog alone made the moan, what was she ailing from that she behaved so strangely ?

They now crossed the hall, and though they walked as noiselessly as possible, the tread of their foot-steps echoed in the hall! The logs in the fire-place were lying amidst the white ashes, and the fire was low and almost dying; but when Geraldine passed by the side of the fire-place, a flame suddenly leapt forth from the dying logs and flashed around the room. Christabel looked up to see Geraldine's eyes, but she saw nothing suspicious and, accidentally, caught sight of Sir Leoline's fine shield that was hanging in a shaded corner of the wall. This brought back to her mind the delicate state of her father's health, and so she whispered to Geraldine: "Please tread softly; ym father is apt to be disturbed in his sleep—for he rarely sleeps well."

Sweet Christabel now removes the sandals from her feet; and, lest the air carry the sounds (and disturb Sir Leoline), they walk noiselessly, from stair to stair, sometimes in darkness, sometimes guided by the pale light of the moon ; when they pass Sir Leoline's room, they control their breath, and are almost as silent as death ; at last they reach Christabel's room and, entering it, Geraldine presses down the rushes scattered near the chamber door.

Outside the moon shines but dimly, while within the room there is no trace of moonlight. But even without it, they can see the curiously carved chamber, full of beautiful and strange statues; these are the products of the sculptor's fancy, specially made for a lady's chamber. The lamp is hanging by a double chain from the feet of a scúlptured angel ; this silver lamp is burning weakly and dimly, but, wishing to kindle the light, Christabel trims it, and makes it bright, and leaves the lamp swinging to and fro. Watching the light, Geraldine falls upon the floor in an exhausted condition.

Seeing this, Christabel cried : "You are very tired, Lady Gcraldine, and I therefore beg you to drink this wine; my mother

made it with the juice of wild flowers, and it has such powers that you will soon feel strong again."

Geraldine weakly asked by way of answer: "Will your mother pity me, a maid so wretched and helpless?" Christabel returned this answer: "Alas for me! My mother died the very hour I was born. Our old friar has told me that my mother died saying that (though dead) she was sure to hear the castle bell strike twelve on the day of my marriage; I now wish that my dear mother were indeed with us here!" Geraldine now said that she too wished that Lady Leoline were in the room. But her voice changed at once, and she shrieked: "You, restless and wandering mother, go away; disappear! I have power to compel you to leave us alone!" What was the matter with Geraldine that she suddenly cried like this, staring wildly with disturbed eyes? Could she actually *see* dead people—people without bodies? Else, why did she cry thus with a hollow, ghostly voice: "Go away, woman; this is *my* hour: even though you might be her (Christabel's) guardian spirit, *this* hour is mine—woman, go away!"

Raising up her blue eyes above, Christabel knelt by Geraldine's side and said: "Alas, dear lady, your head is confused as a result of the day's fearful ride!" Geraldine wiped her perspiring and cold forehead and replied faintly that it was all over (i.e. the vision that perturbed her had disappeared).

Once again Geraldine drank the wine made out of wild flowers, and now her fair large eyes shone brightly; she got up from the floor whereon she had sunk before, and now stood erect. Like a strange lady who had come from a distant country, the lofty lady appeared very beautiful to look at!

The stately Geraldine then remarked: "Virtuous Christabel, the angels that live in Heaven love you, even as you love them; in return for the good that befell me to-night and as an offer of thanksgiving, I shall, in my own humble way, try, O fair maiden, to do you some good. Before I go to sleep, I must pray, and, therefore, you may undress in the meantime."

Christabel agreed to the suggestion and did as Geraldine directed her; she removed the clothes from her gentle limbs and lay down in her bed in all her natural loveliness.

So many thoughts—happy and unhappy—passed confusedly through her mind that Christabel found it impossible to close

her eyes and sleep ; she therefore half-way arose from her bed and, reclining on her elbow, she idly looked at the lady Geraldine.

Meanwhile Geraldine bowed under the lamp and slowly and cunningly looked around the room. She then drew in a deep breath, as if she shuddered, and unloosed the belt from under her bosom; her silken robe and undergarment both slipped to her feet ; and so her bosom and half her side were exposed to the view : so beautiful looked Geraldine that it could only be imagined, not described. May God protect sweet (and innocent) Christabel !

As yet Geraldine neither speaks nor moves ; hers is a woebegone look ! She appears to be weakly attempting to lift some weight that is pressing her down; she looks at Christabel, and by this means she tries to delay the fatal action. Then, of a sudden, as though she defies her destiny, in her pride and contempt she lies down by Christabel's side.

Now Geraldine took Christabel in her arms—it was an unlucky day for Christabel!—and spoke as follows in a low and mournful voice : "By touching my bosom, Christabel, you come under the influence of my magic, which will henceforth control your speech. You now know the cause of my shame and the proof of my misery ; you will remember all this to-morrow also; but you are powerless to fight me. The only thing that you can do is to tell (your people) that you heard a low moaning sound in the forest at night, that you found there an exceedingly beautiful lady; that you brought her home, out of love and pity, to protect her from the chilly air of the forest. (More than this you will be unable to explain)".

The Conclusion to Part I.

It was a beautiful and inspiring sight to see Christabel when she was praying at the old oak tree; in the midst of the irregular shadows cast by the mossy, but leafless, branches of the tree, she was then kneeling in the moonlight and taking her pious vows ; her slender palms were then pressed together, and her breasts were heaving now and then ; her face was fair rather than pale, her blue eyes were bright rather than clear, because they were about to well with tears; and her innocent face was equally ready to bless the virtuous or to spurn the evil-minded.

(This *was* the Christabel we saw first; and now—such a change has befallen her!) What a woeful change! Christabel is now sleeping with open eyes; she is dreaming fearful things, dreaming things that alone are evil—the shame and misery of it all! Can this frightened Christabel be the same innocent lady who knelt at the old oak-tree? (While thus Christabel is sadly altered), Geraldine, who has worked this fearful change, is sleeping quietly and serenely, embracing Christabel as if she is her own child!

A star sets, another rises, (and so time passes). An hour has passed since Geraldine's arms, like prison, closed round Christabel; this hour was thine, O Geraldine! you had your wish, and throughout this hour the night-birds were silent by lake or river. (The hour has passed) and the birds are happy once again from cliff to tower, and raise the shout: "Tu-whoo! Tu-whoo!" From forest to hill, the same shout is heard.

The lady Christabel now comes out of her swoon; her limbs gently move, her face becomes sad and soft (she no more sleeps with open eyes), her eye-lids gently close, she sheds large tears that make her eye-lashes seem very bright. (Even as she is sleeping), she often seems to smile just as mere ehildren do when they see a sudden light. Indeed, she both smiles and weeps like a young and beautiful hermitess living alone in the forest, praying always—praying even in her sleep; and should she move her leg violently, it is only due to her chaste blood coursing through her veins and tingling in her feet!

Christabel sees surely an inspiring vision now; it is, perhaps, her guardian spirit; perhaps she knows that her mother, her guardian spirit, is near her always. But Christabel somehow *knows* this for a fact—that, whether in joy or in woe, if only men will call, the saints will come to their rescue, for the blue sky bends over all (Heaven is for all, and God is the protector of all)!

Part II

According to the Baron, Sir Leoline, each matin bell (that is rung to the accompaniment of morning prayers) is a signal for us to return to a world of death (i. e. the so-called 'life' is no more than a lingering death). It was on the morning of Lady Leoline's death that the Baron, arising from his bed and learning the bitter truth, first expressed this opinion; he will repeat these

words every morning till the very day of his death.

(Since life is really a return to death), the law and the custom in the Baron's castle is for the sacristan to tell the beads (or utter prayers) forty-five times between the strokes of the matin bell,—the heavy, warning bell that all the inhabitants of the locality, from Bratha Head to Wyndermere, are certain to hear.

(Hearing the bell), Bracy, the poet, said to himself as follows: Let the matin bell ring! Let the sleepy sacristan count his beads as slowly as he likes! To fill the space between his beads (i.e. prayers), there are, I know, several other mysterious agencies; in the mountain, Langdale Pile, in the chasm, Witch's Lair, and in the fearful ravine, Dungeon-ghyll, are the ghosts of three former sacristans who, one after another, return the death-note of the matin bell, although their ropes are only rocks and their bells are only air (in other words, when the matin bell rings in the castle, the sound echoes and re-echoes in the surrounding countryside). And often, as soon as these three ghosts have finished their mournful peals, as if offended by the note, the devil himself mocks them all with a gladsome sound from the Borrowdale valley.

The gladsome sound travels through the mist and cloud, breaks the silence with its ringing peal, and, (hearing it), Geraldine shakes off her fear and nimbly comes out of her bed. She puts on her white silken robes and braids her hair in an alluring manner and, certain of the power of her magic, she thus rouses the lady Christabel from her sleep: "Sweet lady Christabel, are you still sleeping?—I hope you have rested well!"

Now Christabel awoke and saw Geraldine, the lady who last night had slept by her side,—or rather, the lady she had found at the old oak tree (i.e. Geraldine now looked as innocent as she looked last night at the old oak tree). Indeed, Geraldine looked much more beautiful in the morning than at night, for she seemed to have gained much freshness and beauty through restful sleep. And as she spoke, her looks and gestures radiated such an abundance of happiness that her breasts visibly heaved, her robes appeared to tighten under her belt (thereby indicating the clear outlines of her beautiful body).

"I believe I have sinned (during the night)," said Christabel, and added: "Since now all seems to be well, Heaven be praised!"

Thus, in low, hesitant but sweet tones, Christabel greeted the lofty Geraldine—but Christabel's mind was confused still, as though she had dreamed vivid and disturbing dreams.

Presently Christabel quickly got out of her bed and covered with robes her chaste person; she then prayed that the Saviour (Jesus), who suffered on the cross, would now wash away her own unknown sins, sins committed unawares; having concluded the prayer, Christabel led the fair Geraldine to meet her father, Sir Leoline.

The lovely Christabel and the tall lady, Geraldine, thus together walk through the hall, pass by servants and attendants, and at last enter the Baron's audience chamber.

(When they entered the room), the Baron rose and embraced his gentle daughter lovingly; he also took note of Geraldine with gladness, as also with surprise, and welcomed her in a manner appropriate to so beautiful a lady.

(The Baron now heard from Geraldine her story). After he had heard her story and especially when she told him her father's name (Lord Roland de Vaux), the Baron suddenly became pale, repeated the name of Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine again and again—but why did the Baron wax so pale and repeat Lord Roland's name?

(This was the reason). Leoline and Roland were friends when they were young; but alas! busybodies and scandal-mongers can poison even truthful friendship. True constancy flourishes only in Heaven; life (in this world) is full of misery, and young people, being vain, are apt to quarrel easily. If we are angry with a person whom we love, this anger heats the brain and makes us mad. This was how, as I infer, Leoline and Roland came to behave. Loving the other as if he were a blood-brother, each nevertheless spoke insulting words to the other; and so they parted—and met no more. And yet each of them was deeply pained to feel that he was friendless; and he could not find another friend to ease the pain in his heart. Thus they stood aloof and the pain of separation remained; they stood rather like two cliffs cleft in two—a deep and perilous sea alone flows between the parted cliffs! (While now the cliffs stand apart), neither sunshine nor frost nor thunder can, I believe, wholly efface the marks of their former solidarity (or friendship).

For a brief duration, Sir Leoline stood gazing at Geraldine's face; (her face reminded him of her father's) and he quickly recollected the face of the once youthful Lord Roland of Tryermaine.

This made the Baron forget his age (i. e. he felt he was young again) and (at the thought of Geraldine's sufferings) his noble heart swelled with anger; in the name of Jesus Christ's wounds, the Baron swore that he would proclaim far and wide, with trumpets and other dignified means, that the people who had so wronged Geraldine were base and tainted rogues; if they dared to deny the charge, they, the cowardly traitors, might proceed to Sir Leoline's court on a day announced by his herald—and there and then, the Baron would kill them, and thereby dislodge their poisonous souls from their bodies. So spake the Baron; his eyes rolled in flashing anger; for, they had cruelly seized the lady Geraldine, who, he knew now, was the beautiful daughter of his friend.

Tears came to Sir Leoline's face, and he took Geraldine in his arms, and she too responded to the embrace and prolonged it with a joyous look. When she noticed all this, Christabel saw something that made her recoil and shudder; once again she saw a terrible vision, she remembered the touch and the pain of Geraldine's body! (It is a woeful tale! Why should an innocent maid like you, O gentle Christabel, see fearful sights like these!) Christabel remembered—she *saw*—Geraldine's stained bosom; she *felt* its cold and poisonous touch, and, with a sudden hissing sound, Christabel drew in her breath (as if in recoil at the thing she saw). But when Sir Leoline wildly turned round, he saw nothing strange—he saw only his own sweet daughter standing with upraised eyes, as if she were indeed praying.

The memory of the touch of Geraldine's body, the vision, that taint, now passed away: and Christabel saw instead the blessed vision (of her guardian spirit, of her mother); after Geraldine's brief hour of triumph—when she and Christabel were sleeping together—it was this vision that had comforted Christabel's restful hours of sleep. Christabel saw this vision again, remembered the happiness she had experienced last night, and again her eyes and her lips flushed with happiness!

Surprised again, the Baron asked his beloved daughter what ailed her and made her change colour so quickly. She returned this

answer: "All will yet be well !" So powerful was Geraldine's charm that Christabel was tongue-tied and was unable to explain anything further.

Sir Leoline, however, thought that the Geraldine he saw was truly a being divine. Her face now showed an admixture of beauty as well as sorrow,—she seemed to regret that she had somehow pained and offended the gentle, sweet Christabel. Geraldine therefore begged the Baron in a low voice to send her away at once to her own father's castle.

But Sir Leoline said : "No, by my soul ! I won't send you!" Then, turning to Bracy, the bard, Sir Leoline said: "Bracy, I entrust you with this duty. Take two horses, suitably and attractively harnessed; take with you also some young man you like best, to help you on the way and to learn your songs ; clothe yourselves ceremoniously, and then, with ringing music, you two ride over the mountains quickly—do not take the usual valley road, for then you are likely to be delayed by various people talking to you on the way. After you cross the Irthing river, you should travel faster still up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood, till at last you reach that fine castle of Tryermaine, which stands out boldly as a warning to the Scottish marauders. Bard Bracy, riding your swift horses and singing your melodious songs,—their sound being louder than the tread of your horses' hooves,—you should speedily reach the Hall of Tryermaine Castle. And there you should tell Lord Roland loudly that his daughter is safe and free—and that Sir Leoline has sent this message through you. Tell Lord Roland that I request him to come here with all his numerous attendants in order to take back his lovely daughter. Tell him further that when he comes with his attendants, riding horses foaming at the mouth, I shall meet him on the way, and that I shall tell him then that I very much regret to have spoken insulting words to him on that fatal day (so many years ago). Since that evil hour (that witnessed our separation), many years have passed and yet never again did I come across a true friend like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

Geraldine knelt before Sir Leoline, clasped his knees, raised her face, and showed her eyes, eyes that were filled with tears of thanksgiving. And Bracy replied, with an unsteady voice, after gracefully offering his greetings to all the assembled

company: "Your word of command, Sir Leoline, is more agreeable to me than is my own music. However, I beg of you this boon—that you ask me not to undertake my journey to-day. Such an unusual dream I dreamed last night, that I have vowed to clear with loud music the forest of an evil presence, of which I was warned in my dream last night. In my dream I saw the dove, the gentle bird that you love and have named Christabel (after your own daughter), fluttering its feathers and crying alone wildly in the forest among the green herbs. When I saw her and heard her cries, I wondered what could possibly ail her—for I was then unable to see anything suspicious near it, except the grass and the green herbs near it at the foot of the old oak tree. I remember that in my dream I went out to discover what exactly was the matter with the bird and why the bird was lying on the ground, trembling all over. At first, when I looked at the bird, I could see no cause for her agonized cries; and yet, for the sake of the lady Christabel who loves the bird so much, I bent down to take the dove in my hands—when lo! I saw that a glistening green snake had encircled the dove's wings and neck. The snake was as green as the herbs on which it lay; its head was touching the dove's own neck; and, as the dove moved and heaved, so did the snake also! Suddenly I woke up and heard the castle clock chiming the hour of midnight, and the sounds echoed in the tower. Though thus my sleep had ceased, I could not forget the prophetic dream—I seemed to see it before me still. Therefore I vowed that to-day I would wander through the forest, singing holy and powerful songs to drive away any evil spirits that might be lingering there."

So said Bracy: the Baron, who had been inattentively listening to the bard with a smile, now turned to Geraldine with a look of admiration and love, and said in a dignified courtly manner: "Sweet maid, you are Lord Roland's beautiful dove; your father and I, with our arms that are more strong than (Bracy's) harp or song, will destroy the snake (i. e. your enemies)." As he spoke these words, Sir Leoline kissed Geraldine's forehead—and she, like a coy maiden, with her blushing cheeks and charming manners, turned away her large bright eyes, and disengaged herself from the Baron. She now lifted her flowing robe, left it partly to swing over her right arm, folded her arms in front of her, bent her head so low that it

seemed to touch her bosom, and cast a cunning glance at Christabel—Jesus, Mary, shield her (Christabel) well!

A snake's eye is small and dull and vicious and stupid; and now the lady Geraldine's large bright eyes suddenly grew small in her head, as small as a serpent's eyes; and, expressing some hatred but much more awe, she cunningly looked at Christabel. It was done in a moment,—the expression changed at once! But Christabel, her head half unconscious and dazed, gave out a hissing sound, shuddered visibly, and almost tottered and fell on the ground. But Geraldine turned away from Christabel as if she wished to escape from her; she rolled her bright and beautiful eyes—eyes that seemed to express wonder and grief—and appealingly stared at Sir Leoline.

As for Christabel, she could see no other sight, think no other thought, but the serpent-eye of Geraldine. Although Christabel was a guileless and altogether pure maiden, somehow (I know not how) she had deeply assimilated that snake-like stare; and now Christabel's features seemed to have wholly resigned themselves to this one fearful image of Geraldine's serpent-eye. In her own way, Christabel tried to imitate that look of causeless and traitorous hate. And thus, in a mood of dazed unconsciousness, Christabel stood awhile, just in front of her father, still unnaturally assuming that look of cunning hate,—even so, this look but slightly distorted Christabel's usually innocent and beautiful eyes.

This serpent-feeling soon passed. Christabel (with a feeling of relief) paused and prayed silently awhile, and, falling at her father's feet, said: "Invoking my mother's soul, I beg you to send this woman (Geraldine) away." More than this Christabel was unable to say: though she knew more (about Geraldine's serpent-nature), she was under the control of Geraldine's magic, and hence could not reveal anything.

Why do Sir Leoline's cheeks betray both paleness and anger? Sir Leoline, your only child—your joy and pride, so fair, so innocent, so mild,—for whom your wife died (at the very moment of Christabel's birth), is at your feet (making this request). In the name of her mother and her labour-pains, do not think ill of Christabel. Your wife prayed before she died for your and your daughter's welfare; (your wife prayed) that

your daughter, Christabel,—then a mere babe, just born—might grow to be your pride and joy. Uttering this prayer, your wife forgot her death-pains (and died peacefully). (Remember your dead wife) and do not wrong her child and thine—your only child, Christabel !

Perhaps such thoughts flitted through the Baron's mind and heart—but they only increased his anger and pain and made him more and more confused. Anger and pain, as it were, broke his heart in two ; his cheeks seemed to tremble and his eyes seemed to glow with fury. His only child, Christabel, had thus dishonoured him in his old age ! She had (by asking him to send away Geraldine) spoilt his hospitality to his friend's (Lord Roland's) wronged daughter—and Christabel had done this owing to jealousy ! (Thus the Baron thought) ; and, fixing his angry and determined eye on the gentle bard, he spoke with sudden severity : "Why, Bracy, why are you yet idling here ? Did I not command you to go away (on an errand)?" Bracy obeyed the Baron (and went away) ; and Sir Leoline, the aged knight, turning away from his own daughter, Christabel, took Geraldine by the hand, and led her away from the room.

The Conclusion to Part II.

When Christabel was a little child, a nimble elf-like beautiful creature, singing and dancing to herself like a fairy with red round cheeks,—a child who found joy without seeking it, then, indeed, it was a sight to gladden a father's (Sir Leoline's) eyes with happiness. And he loved her more and more,—loved her so much that the very depth of his affection for Christabel made him now say words of unmeant bitterness. Perhaps,—to bring together such unlike thoughts (affection within, bitterness without)—to treat contemptuously the entreaty of a daughter and to cherish such a creature of evil as Geraldine—is an odd and a doleful thing. On the other hand, even when Sir Leoline was uttering wild and angry words, he felt inwardly a sweet recoil of love and pity for his daughter—this was the prettier and tenderer part of his action. It is a shame and a source of pain that such things should happen ; but in this world of sin, people get confused in their hearts and minds, and act in this fashion only under the double influence of pain and anger,—even as Sir Leoline did !

Suggestive Questions on 'Christabel'.

1. Relate briefly the story of *Christabel* in your own words.

2. Contrast the midnight enchantment of Part I with the daylight enchantment of Part II.

3. Show how Coleridge subtly suggests the snake-like quality of Geraldine.

4. Narrate Bracy's dream and explain how Sir Leoline misunderstands its implications.

5. Write a note on the broken friendship between Sir Leoline and Lord Roland de Vaux.

6. What is the "moral" or underlying idea of *Christabel* ?

7. Write an essay on the supernatural machinery in *Christabel.*

8. Discuss *Christabel* as a poem of "atmosphere".

9. From Parts I and II, can you conclude that Christabel will be ultimately released from the power of Geraldine ?

10. Give an account of the "history" of *Christabel* or narrate the circumstances under which it was composed.

11. Write notes on the form and metre of *Christabel.*

12. Make a comparative study of *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel.*